

Mawlid

Celebrating the Birth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ

by

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In the Name of Allāh al-Beneficent Most Merciful

“It is beyond me how someone who has strong *īmān* can possibly dispute the manifestation of joy on the occasion we consider the dearest and most auspicious of all—the dawning of the Muḥammadan light on this world.”
Badr al-Dīn al-Kattānī.¹

Glory to Allāh Who has illuminated existence with the rising of the light of the Best of Creation, our Master Muḥammad – upon him and his Family blessings and peace!

According to the majority of the Ulema, the celebration of the Prophetic birth, called *Mawlid al-Nabī* or *Mīlād al-Nabī*, is among the *qurubāt* or recommended beneficial acts through which one hopes to obtain the good pleasure of Allāh ﷻ and shows gratitude for His greatest favor to worlds in the person of the Final Prophet, the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ.

This ruling of recommendation and desirability was stated by the following authorities among others:

‘Abd al-Sāmī al-Rampūrī. A *Khalīfa* of Ḥajjī Imdād Allāh, he wrote a book titled *al-Anwār as-Sāṭi‘a fī Ithbāt al-Mawlid wal-Fātiḥa*.

Abū Shāma. The *ḥāfiẓ* and historian Abū Shāma (599-665), the Shaykh of Imām al-Nawawī, said in his book on innovations titled *al-Bā‘ith ‘alā Inkār al-Bida‘ wa al-Ḥawādith* (p. 23): “Among the best innovations in our day is the remembrance of the birthday of the Prophet ﷺ.”

Al-‘Alā’ī. The Ḥanafī *ḥāfiẓ* Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl ibn Kīkaldī al-‘Alā’ī in his book *al-Durra al-Saniyya fī Mawlidī Khayr al-Bariyya* ﷺ.

Al-Bakrī. Shaykh Abū al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Bakrī in his seven-part book *al-Anwār wa Miftāḥ al-Surūr wal-Afkār fī Mawlid al-Nabī al-Mukhtār* (“The Lights and the Key to Happiness and Reflection Concerning the Birth of the Elect Prophet ﷺ”).

Al-Bursawī. The Ottoman Shaykh al-Islām Sulaymān al-Bursawī (d. >800), Imām to the Sultan Yild Bayram Bāyazīd, authored a *Mawlid* text

¹In the daily *al-Mithāq*, published by Rābitat ‘Ulamā’ al-Maghrib, #488 (10 Rabī‘ al-Awwal 1404 = 15 December 1983).

that achieved great fame and was recited in *Mawlid* gatherings for a long time.

Dahlān. The Shaykh al-Islām and Mufti of Makka al-Sayyid Aḥmad ibn Zaynī Dahlan, in his large book *al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya wal-Āthār al-Muḥammadiyya*, said (p. 51): “To celebrate the *Mawlid* and to remember the Prophet ﷺ is accepted by all the Ulema of the Muslims.”

Al-Dirdīr. The Mālikī *Faqīh* Sīdī al-Dirdīr in his *Mawlid*.

Al-Fayrūzābādī. The Shāfi‘ī Imām, *hāfiẓ*, and lexicographer Majd al-Dīn Abū Ṭāhir Muḥammad ibn Ya‘qūb al-Fayrūzābādī al-Shīrāzī (d. 817) in his book *al-Nafḥat al-Anbariyya fī Mawlidī Khayrī al-Bariyya* ﷺ.

Ḥajjī Imdād Allāh Muḥājir Makkī (d. 1317/1899), the *murshid* of Shaykh Rashīd Ahmad Gangohī, held *Mawlid* gatherings each year during which he would stand and recite invocations of blessings and peace upon the Prophet ﷺ.²

Al-Haytamī. The Imām and *hāfiẓ* of Makka and pre-eminent Jurist of the Shāfi‘ī School, Ibn Hajar al-Haytamī, in his books such as the *Fatāwā Hadīthiyya*; *al-Ni‘mat al-Kubrā ‘alā al-‘Ālam fī Mawlidī Sayyidi Waladi Ādam* ﷺ; *Tahrīr al-Kalām fī al-Qiyāmi ‘inda Dhikri Mawlidī Sayyidi al-Anām* ﷺ; *Tuhfat al-Akhyār fī Mawlidī al-Mukhtār* ﷺ.

Al-Ḥimyarī. Shaykh ‘Isā al-Ḥimyarī’s *Bulūgh al-Ma‘mūl fī al-Ihtifā’ wa al-Ihtifāl bi-Mawlid al-Rasūl* ﷺ.

Ibn Dihya. The Mālikī *hāfiẓ* Abū al-Khaṭṭāb ‘Umar ibn al-Ḥasan, known as Ibn Dihya al-Kalbī (d. 633) in his book *al-Tanwīr fī Mawlid al-Sirāj al-Munīr*.

Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī. He issued a fatwa declaring the praiseworthiness of the celebration of *Mawlid* as quoted in full by al-Suyūṭī in *Ḥusn al-Maqṣid*:

An authentic primary textual basis from which its legal validity is inferable has occurred to me, namely the rigorously authenticated (*ṣaḥīḥ*) ḥadīth in the collections of al-Bukhārī and Muslim that the Prophet ﷺ came to Mādīna and found the Jews fasting on the tenth of Muḥarram

²*Fayṣla-i-Haft Mas’ala* (p. 111).

(‘*Āshūrā*’), so he asked them about it and they replied: “It is the day on which Allāh drowned Pharaoh and rescued Mūsā, so we fast in it to give thanks to Allāh ﷻ,” which indicates the validity of giving thanks to Allāh for the blessings He has bestowed on a particular day in providing a benefit, or averting an affliction. We repeat our thanks on the anniversary of that day every year, giving thanks to Allāh with various forms of worship such as prostration, fasting, giving charity or reciting the Qur’ān... Then what blessing is greater than the birth of the Prophet ﷺ, the Prophet of mercy, on this day? In light of which, one should take care to commemorate it on the day itself in order to conform to the above story of Mūsā and the tenth of Muḥarram, [but] those who do not view the matter thus do not mind commemorating it on any day of the month, while some have expanded its time to any of day the year, whatever exception may be taken at such a view.³

Ibn al-Humām’s father. Burhān al-Dīn Abū al-Ṣafā’ ‘Alī ibn Abī al-Wafā’ al-Shāfi‘ī al-Maqdisī (d. 887) in his book *Faṭḥ Allāhū Ḥasbī wa Kafā fī Mawlid al-Muṣṭafā* ﷺ.

Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn. The *hāfiẓ* of Damascus Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr al-Qayṣī, known as Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī (777-842) in three books: *Jāmi‘ al-Āthār fī Mawlid al-Nabī al-Mukhtār* (“The Compendium of Reports on the Birth of the Chosen Prophet ﷺ”), *al-Lafẓ al-Rā‘iq fī Mawlid Khayr al-Khalā‘iq* (“The Shining Expressions Concerning the Birth of the Best of Creation ﷺ”) and *Wird al-Ṣādī bi Mawlid al-Nabī al-Hādī* (“The Continuous Spring: the Birth of the Guiding Prophet”). In the latter book he cited al-Bukhārī’s narration in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* that every Yawm al-Ithnayn the punishment of Abū Lahab – the disbelieving uncle of the Prophet ﷺ – is diminished in the grave in recognition of his once freeing his slave-girl Thuwayba when she announced him the news of the birth of his nephew.⁴ Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn then comments:

³Ibn Hajar as quoted in al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn al-Maqṣid* in *al-Hāwī li al-Fatāwā* as translated by Keller in *The Reliance of the Traveller*, section w58.0.

⁴There is doubt as to the connection of Thuwayba’s manumission with the Prophet’s ﷺ birth despite the apparent statement to that effect in ‘Urwa’s version. Al-Bukhārī’s narration states: Narrated ‘Urwa: Thuwayba was the freed slave girl of Abū Lahab whom he manumitted and then she nursed the Prophet ﷺ (*kāna Abū Lahabin a‘taqahā fa’arda‘at al-Nabī* ﷺ cf. Ibn Sa’d, Abū ‘Awāna in his *Musnad*, ‘Abd al-Razzāq in his *Musannaf*, Abū Nasr al-Marwazī in *al-Sunna*, al-Bayhaqī in the *Shu‘ab*, al-Kilā‘ī in *al-Iktifā’*, Ibn Taymiyya in *al-Sārīm al-Mashlūl*, Ibn Kathīr in *al-Bidāya*, al-Zayla‘ī in *Nasb al-Rāya*, the *Sīra Halabiyya*, al-Suyūṭī in the *Khasā‘is* etc.). When Abū Lahab died, one of his relatives saw him in a dream in a very bad state and asked him: “What have you found?” Abū Lahab said: “I have not found

*If such a disbeliever was denounced [in the Qur'ān]
And "Perish his hands" in the flames without end,
Yet it is narrated that every Monday, permanently,
His torment is lightened because of his joy at [the birth of] Aḥmad,
What do you make of a servant who spent all his life
Happy with Aḥmad, and died believing in Divine Oneness?*

Ibn Rajab. The ḥāfiẓ Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī held the same opinion as cited by the ḥāfiẓ Muḥammad ibn Ja'far al-Kattānī in *al-Yumn wal-Is'ād* (p. 24).

Ibn al-Subkī. See al-Subkī.

‘Illīsh. The Mālikī Faqīh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ‘Illīsh in *al-Qawl al-Munjī*, his commentary on al-Barzanjī's *Mawlid*.

Al-‘Irāqī. The Egyptian Imām, ḥāfiẓ, and Shaykh al-Islām Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Irāqī authored a book on *Mawlid* titled *al-Mawrid al-Hanī fīl-Mawlid al-Sanī* ("The Quenching Spring Concerning the Pure Prophetic Birth").

Al-Jazarī. The specialist of Qur'anic readings and ḥāfiẓ of Egypt Shams al-Dīn al-Jazarī (d. 833) in his book *‘Urf al-Ta'rīf bi al-Mawlid al-Sharīf* ("The Beneficent Communication on the Noble Prophetic Birth").

Al-Kattānī. The Mālikī Ḥadīth Master and Imām, al-Sayyid al-Sharīf Muḥammad ibn Ja'far al-Kattānī (d. 1345) in his book *al-Yumnu wa al-Is'ādu bi Mawlidī Khayrī al-'Ibād* ﷺ.

Al-Lu'lu'ī. The Shaykh of Damascus, Abū al-Qāsim Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān al-Lu'lu'ī (d. 867) in his books *al-Durr al-Munazzam fī Mawlid al-*

any rest since I left you, except that I have been given water to drink in this (the space between his thumb and other fingers) and that is because of my manumitting Thuwayba." However, evidence from Ibn Sa'd's *Tabaqāt* (1:108), and other books of *Sīra* cf. Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Ṭabarī's *Dhakhā'ir al-Uqbā* (1:259) indicates that Abū Lahab manumitted Thuwayba in connection with the Prophet's ﷺ migration rather than his birth cf. Ibn Hajar, *Fath* (9:145) and *Isāba*, book of the Women, under "Thuwayba" (8:36 = 7:548), citing the narration from Ibn Sa'd in his *Tabaqāt*, chapter of "those who nursed the Prophet ﷺ": "Thuwayba was the Prophet's ﷺ milk-nurse and he would treat her as his family while he was in Makka, and Khadīja would treat her with great respect; at that time she was owned by Abū Lahab and Khadīja asked him to sell her to her, but he refused. When the Prophet ﷺ migrated, Abū Lahab manumitted her." And Allāh ﷻ knows best.

Nabī al-Mu'aẓẓam and its abridgment *al-Lafẓ al-Jamīl bi Mawlid al-Nabī al-Jalīl*.

Al-Mālikī. Shaykh al-Islām, al-Sayyid Muḥammad ibn 'Alawī ibn 'Abbās al-Mālikī in his books *al-Bayān wa al-Ta'rīf fī Dhikrā al-Mawlid al-Nabawī al-Sharīf* and *Hawla Iḥtīfāl al-Mawlid al-Nabawī al-Sharīf* in which he gave the following fatwa:

1. **We say that celebrating the *Mawlid* of the Prophet ﷺ is acceptable, that to make gatherings for the hearing of his *Sīra* (Life) and listening to *Madḥ* (Praise) that has been written for him is acceptable, and that giving food to people and bringing happiness to the *Umma* on that occasion is acceptable.**
2. **We say that the celebration of the Prophet's ﷺ *Mawlid* must not only be on the 12th of Rabī' al-Awwal, but can and should be on every day of every month in every mosque, in order for people to feel the light of Islām and the light of *Sharī'a* in their hearts.**
3. **We say that *Mawlid* gatherings are an effective and efficient means for calling people to Islam and educating children. These meetings provide a golden opportunity that must not be lost, for every Scholar and *dā'ī* to teach and remind the Nation of the Prophet ﷺ of his good character, his way of worshipping, and his way of treating people. This is a way to make children love and remember their Prophet, by giving them food and juice and gifts to make them happy.⁵**

Al-Nabhānī. The pious Qāḍī of Beirut, Imām Yūsuf ibn Ismā'īl al-Nabhānī, in *al-Nazm al-Badī' fī Mawlid al-Shafī'* ﷺ ("The Fine Poetry on the Birth of the Intercessor" ﷺ).

Nanotwī. Mawlānā Qāsim Nanotwī, one of the founders of the Deobandī School, would stand during the *Mawlid* and recite: "Help me, kindness of Aḥmad! For, besides you, there is no helper for Qāsim the helpless!"⁶

⁵This fatwa was reproduced uncredited in the *Encyclopedia of Islamic Doctrine*, as were the sections on the "proofs that celebrating the *Mawlid* is licit in the Law" and "the celebration of *Mawlid* as understood by the scholars of the 'salafi' movement."

⁶*Qasā'id Qāsimī Deobandī* (p. 8).

Al-Qaraḍāwī. Dr. Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī's recent fatwā in support of the celebration of *Mawlid*.⁷

Al-Qārī. The *ḥāfiẓ* of Makka, Mulla 'Alī al-Qārī (d. 1014) in a book titled *al-Mawrid al-Rāwī fī al-Mawlid al-Nabawī* ("The Quenching Spring on the Prophetic Birth").

Al-Sakhāwī. The Egyptian Imām and *ḥāfiẓ* al-Sakhāwī authored a book on *Mawlid* titled *Subul al-Hudā*.

Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz Dihlawī. See Shāh 'Abd al-Raḥīm.

Shāh 'Abd al-Raḥīm (d. 1131/1719) the father of Shāh Walī Allāh Muḥaddith Dihlawī (d. 1176/1762) held *Mawlid* gatherings annually, whereupon he prepared and distributed meals to the poor.⁸ This was also the practice of Shāh Walī Allāh and his learned son, Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz Muḥaddith Dihlawī (d. 1239/1834), one of the renewers of the thirteenth Hijrī century.⁹ Shāh Walī Allāh once attended a *Mawlid* gathering in Makka al-Mukarrama during which he said he saw manifestations of light cascading down.¹⁰

Shāh Maẓhar Allāh Dihlawī the Grand Mufti, held *Mawlid* gatherings in great splendor, lasting all night from the *'Ishā* prayer until the *Fajr* prayer at dawn. *Ṣalawāt* and *Salam* was recited in a standing position, after which food and sweetmeats were distributed.¹¹

Shāh Walī Allāh Dihlawī. See Shāh 'Abd al-Raḥīm.

Al-Shawkānī. Imām al-Shawkānī proclaimed that he did not follow any School of Law but followed the proofs of the Law directly. In his biographical compendium *al-Badr at-Ṭālī* he wrote: "It is permissible to celebrate the Prophet's ﷺ birthday." He mentioned that Mullā 'Alī al-Qārī held the same opinion in a book entitled *al-Mawrid al-Rāwī fī al-Mawlid al-Nabawī*.

⁷http://sunnah.org/ibadaat/shaykh_qardawi_approves_of_celeb.htm.

⁸*Al-Durr al-Thamīn* (p. 8).

⁹*Al-Durr al-Minazzam* (p. 89) and *Tafsīr 'Azīzī, Sūra Alam Nashrah*.

¹⁰*Fuyud al-Haramayn* (p. 80-81).

¹¹*Tadhkara-i-Mazhar-i-Masud* (p. 176-177).

Al-Subkī. Shaykh al-Islām, the foremost Shāfi'ī Jurist Taqī al-Dīn 'Alī ibn 'Abd al-Kāfi al-Subkī used to celebrate the *Mawlid* surrounded by the Ulema of Damascus as reported by his son Imām Tāj al-Dīn Ibn al-Subkī in the lengthy biography of his father in his masterpiece *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyya al-Kubrā*.

Al-Suyūfī. The Egyptian Imām and *ḥāfiẓ* al-Suyūfī in his fatwa *Husn al-Maqṣid fī 'Amal al-Mawlid* ("The Excellent Goal in the Celebration of the Prophetic Birth") in his compendium titled *al-Hāwī lil-Fatāwā* said: "The reason for gathering for *tarāwīḥ* prayers is *Sunna* and *qurba* (to seek nearness to Allāh)... and similarly we say that the reason for gathering to celebrate the *mawlid* is *mandūb* (recommended) and *qurba* (an act of drawing near)... and the intention to celebrate the *mawlid* is *mustahsana* (excellent) without a doubt." One of the reasons al-Suyūfī wrote this fatwa was to refute point by point the objections of Shaykh Tāj al-Dīn 'Umar ibn 'Alī al-Lakhmī al-Fākihānī (d. 734) to the celebration of the *Mawlid*. Shaykh Aḥmad Zarrūq said in his commentary on al-Qaṣṭallānī's *al-Mawāhib al-Lāduniyya*: "As for the claim by al-Tāj al-Fākihānī, one of our Mālikī colleagues, that the celebration of the *Mawlid* is a reprehensible and lowly innovation, al-Suyūfī took care of refuting all that he forwarded in support of his claim word for word – may Allāh grant him increased care and kindness!" Al-Kattānī cited it in *al-Yumnu wal-Is'ād* (p. 24).

Zarrūq. See al-Suyūfī.

See, in English, the section on *Mawlid* in the third volume of the *Encyclopedia of Islamic Doctrine*.

The only disagreement to this ruling comes from a minority of elements almost invariably associated with the "Salafī" and Wahhābī movement, although their putative mentor, Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya, said of the celebration of the *Mawlid*:

What some people innovated, either by analogy with the Christians who celebrate the birth of 'Īsā ﷺ, or out of love for the Prophet ﷺ and in order to exalt him – Allāh may reward them for such love and effort but not on the fact that it is an innovation.... So one may magnify the birthdate of the Prophet ﷺ and treat it as a festival, perhaps obtaining immense reward for it because of his good intentions in honoring the Messenger of Allāh (*mā yuḥdithuhu ba'du al-nāsi immā muḍāḥātan lil-naṣārā fī milādi 'Īsā ﷺ wa'immā maḥabbatan lil-Nabī ﷺ wata'zīman lahu, waAllāhu qad yuthībuhum 'alā ḥādhihi al-maḥabbati wal-ijtihādi lā 'alā al-bida'i.... fata'zīmu al-mawlid wattikhādhuhu mawsiman qad*

*yaf'aluhu ba'du al-nāsi wayakūnu lahu fīhi ajrun 'aẓmun liḥusni qaṣḍihi wata'ẓmihi lirasūlillāh).*¹²

Yet the late “Desert Storm” supporter and Mufti ‘Abd al-‘Azīz bin Bāz publicized a fatwa prohibiting the celebration of the *Mawlid* as an innovation.¹³ Al-Sayyid Muḥammad ibn ‘Alawī al-Mālikī refuted this fatwa with a clear, decisive and well-supported argument in Arabic on the permissibility of *Mawlid* titled *Hawl al-Iḥtifāl bi Dhikrā al-Mawlid al-Nabawī al-Sharīf* in which he challenged Bin Bāz to address the innovations that gained currency in contemporary Makka although never practiced in the earliest three or four centuries such as those listed a few paragraphs further down.

Also in opposition to the fatwa of Bin Baz, al-Sayyid Yūsuf Hāshim al-Rifā‘ī of Kuwait produced a lengthy corrective Fatwa on the permissibility of *Mawlid* celebrations which triggered off a tremendous increase in such celebrations among the Arab populations of the cities of Makka, Madina, Jeddah, Ṭā’if, etc. and in the Gulf States.

The director of the Awqāf of Dubai, Shaykh ‘Īsā ibn Mānī‘ al-Ḥimyarī, wrote yet another brilliant and lengthy corrective Fatwa which received many printings, *Bulūgh al-Ma’mūl fī al-Iḥtifāl wal-Iḥtifāl bi Mawlid al-Rasūl* (“The Attainment of Hopes in Commemorating and Celebrating the Birth of the Prophet ﷺ”) against the erratic fatwa of Bin Baz.¹⁴

An academic scholar, Dr. Muḥammad Abduh Yamānī, Director of Dārul Qibla Institute in Jeddah, a former Minister of Information and renowned author in both the Arabic and English languages, wrote a detailed essay titled “*Aṣṣalātu Wassalāmu ‘alayka yā Rasūlallāh*” which was published in the daily newspaper *Al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ* on the 12th of Rabī‘ al-Awwal in 1987. This essay presented a review of the proofs for *Mawlid* and was well received.

Such recent efforts to make the truth known and repel the insinuations of pseudo-prohibition gave rise to a massive silent movement known as *Irji‘ū ilā Rasūlillāh* or “Return to the Messenger of Allāh” among Arabs both young and old. This movement reflects the awareness of Arab Muslims

¹²Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtidā’ al-Sirāt* (Cairo, al-Fiqqī 1950 ed., p. 294 and 297).

¹³This misguided fatwa was inserted into the Cairo: Dar al-Huda, 1978 edition of Imām Abū Shāma’s *al-Bā’ith ‘alā Inkār al-Bida’ wa al-Hawādith* (p. 107-112) although Imām Abū Shāma himself said in that very book (p. 23) that the celebration of the *Mawlid* is among the best innovations in Islām!

¹⁴Cf. http://sunnah.org/ibadaat/mawlid_dubai.htm.

about the evils of misguided puritanism and are now returning to their forefathers’ enthronement of the love of the Final Prophet ﷺ at the foundation of Islamic belief.

Other similar well-received innovations are the second *adhān* before Jumu’a prayers, the insertion of vowels into the Holy Qur’ān, the construction of places of learning such as *Dārul Ulūms*, together with their so-called *Dastaar Bandi* or congratulatory ceremonies held on completion of Islamic courses and other graduation ceremonies such as those held on the completion of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. These acts were never practiced in the time of the Prophet ﷺ nor in the first three or four centuries.

If one were to take the literal meaning of the word *bid’a* and discard the legal meaning, then gatherings for so-called *Tablīghī* purposes are also a *bid’a*; *Ghusht* is a *bid’a*; engaging in *Chilla* is a *bid’a*; reading outloud from a book called *Tablīghī Nisāb* after congregational prayer is a *bid’a*; publishing religious books is a *bid’a*; using microphones during prayer or *khuṭba* or using rugs inside stone-wall mosques etc. are all *bid’a* and therefore detestable in the extreme! However, such sweeping application of the literal meaning of *bid’a* is misguided and rejected by Consensus.¹⁵

As for the uneducated statement to the effect that “there is no such thing as a good innovation in Islām, it is explicitly contradicted by the words reported from Imām al-Shāfi‘ī and Imām Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām among other major *mujtahid* authorities as explicited above, in the section titled “Al-Shāfi‘ī’s Definition of Innovation.” As for the similar thoughtless objection that for something not to be *bid’a* it must necessarily have precedent in the practice of the Prophet ﷺ or the Companions and Successors, it is put to rest by two proofs: the principle that their *tark* – “not doing something” is not necessarily tantamount to condemnation or prohibition (cf. response to §3 and §23 below) and the countless new Sunnas dating from the centuries that followed, not least of which present-day innovations in the two Holy Sanctuaries, such as:

1. The forming of a congregation to perform *tahajjud* prayers (other than *Tarāwīḥ*) behind an imām in the last ten days of Ramaḍān as practiced today in the Makkan Sanctuary. It is a wonder that certain Ulema see nothing offensive in this innovated additional prayer, yet go to every length to forbid supererogatory congregational night prayers in the first

¹⁵This and the few preceding paragraphs were adapted from a text published on the Internet by the Imam Ahmed Raza Academy In South Africa.

week of Rajab (“*ṣalāt al-raghā’ib*”) and in the night of mid-Sha‘bān (“*ṣalāt laylat al-barā’a*”).

2. The gathering of people on the 27th of Ramaḍān at *tahajjud* at which time the imām delivers a sermon.

3. The call of the muezzin, “the vigil prayer, may Allāh reward you!” (*ṣalātul qiyām athābakumullāh*).

4. The imam’s recitation of a lengthy supplication (*du‘ā’*) at the conclusion of the *Tarāwīh* and *Tahajjud* prayers while those praying behind him say *Amīn* outloud.

5. Singling out the 27th night of Ramaḍān to recite the entire Qur’ān at the Two Sacred Mosques.

6. The caller to prayer formally saying, just before the start of *Tarāwīh* prayers, “Rise (*qūmū*) for *Tarāwīh* prayers, may Allāh reward you!” although there is no *iqāma* for non-*farḍ* prayers.

7. The formation of the notorious so-called “Association for the Enjoinment of Good and the Forbiddance of Evil.

8. The commemoration of the “Week of Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb.” Etc.

All of the above are undoubtedly innovations (*bid’a*) but most of them are of the “good” type, and Allāh knows best.

The Ḥadīth on the ‘*Aqīqa* of Prophetship

Anas ibn Mālik related: “The Prophet ﷺ offered a sacrifice for the newborn (*‘aqīqa*) for himself after he received Prophetship.”¹⁶

This ḥadīth was adduced by al-Suyūfī as a proof for the recommendability of the celebration of the *Mawlid* in *Husn al-Maqṣid* (p. 54, 62, 64-65) where he says:

¹⁶Narrated by al-Bayhaqī in *al-Sunan al-Kubrā* (9:300) while al-Haythamī (4:59) said al-Bazzār and al-Tabarānī narrated it, the latter with a sound chain of transmission.

The reason for gathering for *tarawīh* prayers is Sunna and *qurba* (to seek nearness to Allāh)... Similarly, we say that the reason for gathering to celebrate the *Mawlid* is *mandūb* (recommended) and *qurba* (an act of drawing near).. and the intention to celebrate it is *mustahsana* (deemed excellent) without a doubt... I have derived the permissibility of the *Mawlid* from another source of the Sunna [besides Ibn Ḥajar’s inference from the ḥadīth of ‘Āshūrā’], namely, the ḥadīth found in al-Bayhaqī, narrated by Anas, that “The Prophet ﷺ offered a sacrifice for the newborn (*‘aqīqa*) for himself after he received Prophetship,” although it is mentioned that his grandfather ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib did the *‘aqīqa* on the seventh day after he was born, and the *‘aqīqa* cannot be repeated. Thus the reason for the Prophet’s ﷺ action is to give thanks to Allāh for sending him as a mercy to the worlds, and to give honor to his *Umma* in the same way that he used to invoke blessings on himself. It is recommended for us, therefore, that we also show thanks for his birth by meeting with our brothers, by feeding people, and other such good works and rejoicing.

Shaykh Isma‘īl al-Anṣārī, in imitation of Imām al-Zurqānī in his *Sharḥ al-Mawāhib al-Lāduniyya* (1:140) attempts to weaken this ḥadīth on the grounds that (1) one of its narrators, ‘Abd Allāh ibn Muḥarrar, is very weak (*da‘if jiddan*) and abandoned as a narrator (*matrūk*) – as stated by Ibn Ḥajar in *Talkhīṣ al-Ḥabīr* and *al-Taqrīb* – while (2) al-Bazzār said the ḥadīth is not narrated through other than this Ibn Muḥarrar.

However, the above is incorrect. The ḥadīth does come to us through other chains that do not contain Ibn Muḥarrar. Ibn Ḥajar in the *Talkhīṣ* did not address these chains but contented himself with citing al-Nawawī’s grading of “false” (*bāṭil*) for the ḥadīth which seemingly echoes al-Bayhaqī’s grading of “rejected” (*munkar*), and he also cites al-Bazzār’s claim that there is no other chain for this ḥadīth but that of Ibn Muḥarrar. Yet, in *Fath al-Bārī*, Ibn Ḥajar states of the same ḥadīth that it has a strong chain (*isnād qawī*) and mentions that there may be reasons to consider it either *ḥasan* or *ṣaḥīḥ*, even if he does not agree with them (see below.) So the actual nature of the rejection of the ḥadīth boils down to its chains, not its content, contrary to what the unqualified words of al-Bayhaqī and al-Nawawī might suggest; and the final ruling concerning the grading of this ḥadīth hinges upon the grading of ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Muthannā as a narrator, not ‘Abd Allāh ibn Muḥarrar.

Imām al-Ṭahāwī in *Sharḥ Mushkil al-Āthār*, chapter 162, titled “Is the *‘aqīqa* obligatory or optional?” narrates:

Al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Maṣṣūr al-Bālisī narrated to us: al-Haytham ibn Jamīl narrated to us: ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Muthannā ibn Anas narrated to us: From Thumāma ibn Anas: From Anas: “That the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ offered a sacrifice for the newborn for himself after he received Prophethood.”

Other chains that exclude Ibn Muḥarrar in the narration of this ḥadīth:

– *Hāfiẓ Diyā’ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī* in *al-Aḥādīth al-Mukhtāra* (5:205), grading: *ṣaḥīḥ* chain.

– Al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Awsaṭ*, grading: *ṣaḥīḥ* chain according to al-Haythamī in *Majma’ al-Zawā’id* (4:59): “Narrated by al-Bazzār and al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Awsaṭ*. The latter’s narrators are the men of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* [al-Bukhārī and Muslim] except al-Haytham ibn Jamīl who is ‘trustworthy’ (*thiqa*) and al-Ṭabarānī’s Shaykh, Aḥmad ibn Maṣ’ūd al-Khayyāt al-Maqdisī, but he is not [mentioned] in the *Mizān* [al-Dhahabī’s compilation of weak narrators].”

– Ibn Ḥazm in *al-Muḥallā* (7:528), where he considers it *ṣaḥīḥ* otherwise he would never adduce it.

– Ibn Rushd in *Bidāyat al-Mujtahid* (1:339), chapter on the ‘*aqīqa*’, grading: “It is put in practice by some of the people of knowledge.”

– Ibn Ḥajar in *Fath al-Bārī* (1959 ed. 9:595): “Abū al-Shaykh narrated it through two chains [other than al-Bazzār’s]. ... The second chain is from Abū Bakr al-Mustamlī’s narration from al-Haytham ibn Jamīl and Dāwūd ibn al-Muḥabbar who both said: ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Muthannā narrated to us from Thumāma from Anas.’ Now Dāwūd is weak, but al-Haytham is trustworthy and ‘Abd Allāh is among al-Bukhārī’s narrators. So the ḥadīth has A STRONG CHAIN. It was narrated by Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Ayyman from Ibrāhīm ibn Ishāq al-Sarrāj from ‘Amr al-Nāqid; and by al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Awsaṭ* from Aḥmad ibn Maṣ’ūd, both from al-Haytham ibn Jamīl alone. So *if it were not for what is said about ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Muthannā, this ḥadīth would be sound*.” Then Ibn Ḥajar proceeds to mention the mixed reviews concerning Ibn al-Muthannā (although al-Bukhārī considers him *thiqa*).

Ibn Ḥajar’s grading of Ibn al-Muthannā in *al-Taqrīb* is *ṣadūq, kathīr al-ghalaṭ* which means “credible but errs too much.” Meaning, below fair in his narrations. If we stopped here we would say that the ḥadīth is *ḍa’if* but NOT *ḍa’if jiddan* as claimed. However, the grading of “credible but errs too much”

for Ibn al-Muthannā is questioned by Shaykh Shu‘ayb al-ʿArna’ūṭ and Dr. Ma’rūf ‘Awwād who stated instead, in their revision of *al-Taqrīb* entitled *Tahrīr Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb* (2:260 #3571): “*Bal: ṣadūq, ḥasan al-ḥadīth.*” They also highlighted Ibn Ḥajar’s remark in *Hadī al-Sārī* that al-Bukhārī narrated from him mostly what he reported from his uncle Thumāma, as is the case in this very narration! Therefore, according to their and al-Bukhārī’s criterion, this ḥadīth is AT LEAST *HASAN* (“fair”) and PROBABLY *ṢAḤĪḤ* (“sound”). Contrary to al-Zurqānī’s conclusion which Ismā’īl al-Anṣārī followed, al-Suyūfī was correct in adducing it as one of the proofs for the celebration of Mawlid.

Refutation of a Deobandi Fatwa on Mawlid

<http://www.albalagh.net/taqi.shtml>, a webpage in English devoted to the Deobandi scholar Mufti Taqī Usmānī, states verbatim that “[He] is one of the leading Islamic scholars living today. Author of more than 40 books, he is an expert in the fields of Islamic law, Economics and Hadith.¹⁷ For the past 35 years, he has been teaching at the Darul-Uloom in Karachi that was established by his father Mufti Muhammad Shafī, the late Grand Mufti of Pakistan. He also holds a degree in law and is a Judge at the Sharia Appellate Bench of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. He is a consultant to several international Islamic financial institutions and has played a key part in the move toward interest free banking and the establishment of Islamic financial institutions. He is the deputy chairman of the Jeddah based Islamic Fiqh Council of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC).”

On http://www.albalagh.net/sunnah_and_bidah/rabi-ul-awwal.shtml, another webpage in English features Mufti Taqī Usmānī’s fatwa on Mawlid. From the latter page was excerpted the following fatwa as posted verbatim as of 11 July, 2000. It is left to the Muslim reader to verify firsthand to what extent such a fatwa by Mufti Taqī Usmānī is based on fact and on the sources of Islam which are Qur’ān, Sunna, *Ijmā’* and *Qiyās*. May Allāh forgive the writer of these lines for any unintentional mispropriety against anyone of the Ulema as the purpose of this endeavor is the defense of truth even regardless of family ties, titles, or personal interests. May Allāh cause the truth to shine and inspire us to follow it, and may He cause all else to fade and inspire us to avoid it!

¹⁷He is also the editor of al-Tahānawī’s 21-volume *I’lā’ al-Sunan* in the proof-texts of Hanafī *fiqh*.

1. Mufti Taqī Usmānī (*ḥafīzahullāh*) said: “Rabi‘ul-Awwal is the most significant month in the Islamic history, because humanity has been blessed in this month by the birth of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam.”

This is true, yet the author further down (#17) annuls the benefit of his own statement by denying the validity of any specific day of that month as an appropriate or preferable date for celebrating Mawlid and goes so far as to condemn the choice of that date as a reprehensible innovation. Then he castigates the highlighting of that month to celebrate Mawlid as well.

2. **Mufti Taqī Usmānī said:** “Thus the birth of the Holy Prophet, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam, was the most significant and the most remarkable event in human history.”

This is a confession by Mufti Taqī ‘Usmani that the night of the *Mawlid* is of greater significance and merit than Laylat al-Qadr which is the position of some of the Mālikī Imāms as cited by Abū al-‘Abbās al-Wansharīsī (d. 914) in his encyclopedia of Mālikī fatwās titled *al-Mi‘yār al-Mu‘rab wal-Jāmi‘ al-Mughrib fi Fatāwā Ahl Ifrīqya wal-Andalus wal-Maghrib* (11:280-285) and as reiterated by the Moroccan Scholar al-Raḥḥālī al-Fārūqī.¹⁸

Similarly, the Mālikī Ḥadīth Master and Imām, al-Sayyid al-Sharīf Muḥammad ibn Ja‘far al-Kattānī stated in his book *al-Yumnu wa al-Is‘ādu bi Mawlidī Khayri al-‘Ibād* ﷺ (p. 21):

The two nights of the distinguished noble birth and the magnificent Prophetic Ascension appear to be the very best of the nights of the world without hesitation nor doubt... and if this is the case then such as these two nights [*Mawlid* and *Mi‘rāj*] deserve to be taken henceforth each as a recurring festival among other recurring festivals (*‘id min al-a‘yād*) and as a seasonal celebration (*mawsim*) among other seasonal celebrations devoted to good deeds and striving. Therefore those dates should be respected and venerated, the Book of Allāh should be recited in them, and in their honor deeds should be performed that indicate joy and happiness at their immense merit as well as thankfulness to Allāh ﷻ for His blessings and favors in them. This the Law in no way denies nor condemns, and no reprimand nor prohibition can be directed at those who perform this whatsoever.

¹⁸As quoted by Muhtāyin al-Hājj ‘Abd Allāh al-Fārisī in *al-Nūr al-Lāmi‘* (p. 20).

3. **Mufti Taqī Usmānī said:** “Had there been room in Islamic teachings for the celebration of birthdays or anniversaries, the birthday of the Holy Prophet, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam, would have undoubtedly deserved it more than the birthday of any other person. But that is against the nature of Islamic teachings.”

This is a novel misconception of *Uṣūl* which was refuted notably by the Ghumārī Shaykhs (see #23), namely, that *tark* (not doing something) is NOT a proof that something is condemned or that it is not praiseworthy, as the Prophet ﷺ did not, in his lifetime, do absolutely everything that was praiseworthy or permissible. The same goes for the early generations. For example, the fact that the Prophet ﷺ did not use lines on the floor to straighten the prayer rows nor a partition or curtain for the women’s section in the mosque never makes a *bid‘a* of these two items. Rather, the criteria for judging if something belongs on the accepted side of *Sharī‘a* and is endorsable by the Sunna or not, is to evaluate it in the balance of the Qur‘an and Sunna and the general objective of the Religion (*Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘a*): whatever is confirmed by them is part of them and whatever violates them is rejected.

Furthermore, the Prophet ﷺ actually encouraged the celebration or observance of every notable historical anniversary in the Islamic year in general terms when he said: “Your Lord truly has, in the days of your history, gifted breezes (*naḥāḥāt*). Do expose yourselves to the gifted breezes of your Lord!”¹⁹ The Yemeni Scholar al-Sayyid ‘Alī ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Mu-

¹⁹Narrated from [1] Muhammad ibn Maslama al-Ansārī by al-Tabarānī in *al-Awsat* (3:180) and *al-Kabīr* (19:233-234) with a weak chain cf. al-Haythamī (10:231) and al-Suyūṭī in *al-Jāmi‘ al-Saghīr* (#2398); also by al-Rāmahurmuzī in *al-Muhaddith al-Fāsil* (p. 497 #615) – cf. Ibn Kathīr in his *Tafsīr* (4:87) – with another chain, also weak. Something close is narrated [2] from Anas by al-Hakīm al-Tirmidhī in *Nawādir al-Uṣūl* (*Asl* #185), al-Tabarānī in *al-Kabīr* (1:250) and *al-Du‘ā’* (#26); through him Abū Nu‘aym who said it is single-chained (*gharīb*) from ‘Amr ibn al-Rabī‘ and Safwān in the *Hilya* (3:162) as did al-Baghawī in *Sharḥ al-Sunna* (5:179 #1378); al-Bayhaqī in *al-Asmā‘* (Hāshidī ed. 1:378-379 #306 *isnād da‘īf*) and the *Shu‘ab* (2:42 #1121-1122); Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr in *al-Tamhīd* (5:339); al-Qudā‘ī in *Musnad al-Shihāb* (1:407); Ibn ‘Asākir (24:123 and 52:5) cf. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr* (2:435); and al-Rāfi‘ī in *al-Tadwīn* (3:192), all with a better chain according to al-Haythamī (10:231) though *mursal* since Safwān ibn Sulaym never met Anas, hence al-Suyūṭī also indicated its weakness in *al-Jāmi‘ al-Saghīr* (#1108). Also [3] from Abū Hurayra by Baqī ibn Makhlad in his *Musnad* cf. al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf* (5:40); Ibn Abī al-Dunyā in *al-Faraj ba’d al-Shidda* (#27); al-Tabarānī in *al-Du‘ā’* (#27); Ibn ‘Asākir (24:123); and al-Bayhaqī in the *Shu‘ab* (2:43 #1123) cf. Ibn Rajab, *Latā‘if* (p. 40-41). Also narrated [4] from Abū al-Dardā’ by Ibn Abī Shayba (7:111) and through him Abū Nu‘aym in the *Hilya* (1:221), both with a good *mawqūf* chain but possibly *mursal* between Zayd ibn Aslam and Abū al-Dardā’. Cf. also *Ithāf* (3:280-281) and al-Ghumārī’s *Mudāwī* (1:600-602).

ḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl al-Ṣan‘ānī (1171-1219) authored a monograph in explanation of this ḥadīth titled *Sūq al-Shawq li’Ahli al-Dhawq min Taht ilā Fawq* (“The Market of Desire for the People of Taste from Below to Above”).²⁰

4. **Mufti Taqī Usmānī said:** “That is why, unlike Judaism, Christianity, and Hinduism, there are very few festivals in Islam, which provides for only two Eids (Eidul-fitr and Eidul-Adha) during the whole year.”

There are, indeed, only two ‘*Īds* required by the Law, but this is not to mean that it is not allowed to hold other ‘*Īds* metaphorically speaking. The Prophet ﷺ himself named Jumu‘a a ‘*Īd*. A verse of poetry states, “The day of Jumu‘a, the day of ‘*Īd*, and the visit of a beloved friend: These are three ‘*Īds* for which I thank our Most High Lord.” Sīdī Aḥmad ibn ‘Alīwa al-Mustaghānimī declaimed in his *Dīwān*:

<i>Laysa lil-ghayri in zaharta wujūdun</i>	<i>wa’idhā mā baṭanta anta farīdu</i>
<i>Yā sanā al-kullī in shahidnāka yawman</i>	<i>fahuwa yawmun min al-zamāni</i>
	<i>sa’īdu</i>
<i>Inna lil-nāsi kulla ‘āmin la’īdayni</i>	<i>wa kullu waqtin lanā bika ‘īdu</i>
<i>None, if you appear, can claim to exist;</i>	<i>and, hiding from sight, you</i>
	<i>remain unique.</i>
<i>Most sublime splendor! To see you once</i>	<i>– that is a day glorious among all</i>
	<i>days!</i>
<i>People each year must celebrate two ‘Īds,</i>	<i>but every moment spent with you</i>
	<i>is our ‘Īd!</i>

In fact, every highlighted date in the Islamic calendar is a ‘*Īd*, for example the first ten days of Dhūl-Ḥijja, the Day of ‘Arafa, the Day of ‘Āshūrā, Laylat al-Qadr, and the night of Mi‘rāj which is the greatest *mu’jiza* of the Prophet ﷺ after the Glorious Qur’an. But the *Mawlid* of the Prophet ﷺ looms larger and more important than all of the above including the two prescribed ‘*Īds* in Islam. Sayyid Muḥammad al-Mālikī said in his fatwa *Hawl al-Ihtifāl bi-Dhikrā al-Mawlid al-Nabawī al-Sharīf* (p. 8-9): “How many times did we say that the day of the Mawlid of our Master Muhammad ﷺ is not a ‘*Īd*, nor do we consider it a ‘*Īd*, because it is BIGGER THAN THE ‘*ĪD* AND GREATER AND NOBLER! A ‘*Īd* only comes once a year, as for the celebration of his Mawlid ﷺ and the consideration of his remembrance

and 2:518).

²⁰Cf. al-Qinnawjī, *Abjad al-‘Ulūm* (3:184).

and *Sīra*, they must be permanent and not restricted to a particular time nor place!”

5. **Mufti Taqī Usmānī said:** “The dates of these two Eids do not correspond to the birthday of any of the outstanding persons of Islamic history, nor can their origin be attributed to any particular event of history that had happened in these dates.”

As shown above, it has never been a condition for ‘*Īd* that it correspond to a birthday, nor, inversely, does the nature of birthday preclude a day from being considered a ‘*Īd*. Secondly, it is patently false that the origin of the two ‘*Īds* cannot be attributed to any particular event of history that had happened on these dates as the books of *Tafsīr* are replete with the story of the sacrifice of Ibrāhīm ؑ with his son Ismā‘īl ؑ on the occasion of which was offered a huge ram as stated in the Holy Qur’an.

6. **Mufti Taqī Usmānī said:** “The first event is the completion of the fasts of Ramaḍān and the second event is the completion of Hajj, another form of worship regarded as one of the four pillars of Islam.”

We already said that the ‘*Īd* that takes place at the completion of Hajj has historical connections according to the authorities of *Tafsīr*. We might say also that the ‘*Īd* that takes place at the completion of the month of Ramadan, was also given an historical dimension by Allah ﷻ when He said that fasting is prescribed for us ﴿just as it was prescribed for those before you﴾. All this shows that Allah Most High did not place these two Pillars in a vacuum but in a historical whole of which Muslims are eminently supposed to be aware and observant, just as the Prophet ﷺ said in reaction to the Jewish celebration of ‘Āshūrā: “We have more right of remembering Mūsā” i.e. of commemorating the historical circumstance of his deliverance. Most of the Ulema who wrote fatwas on Mawlid adduce this report as a proof of the desirability of the celebration of Mawlid and its licit character in the Law.

7. **Mufti Taqī Usmānī said:** “The manner prescribed for the celebration of these two Eids (festivals) is also different from non-Islamic festivals. There are no formal processions, illumination or other activities showing formal happiness.”

The manner prescribed for the celebration of these two ‘*Īds* falls into two categories: the requirements prescribed in the Law and the customs followed by the people. The latter do **not** have a fixed form and **may** include everything that does not violate the guidelines of the Law. Processions,

illumination or other activities showing formal happiness do **not** in themselves violate the guidelines of the Law.

8. **Mufti Taqī Usmānī said:** “Islam has not prescribed any festival for the birthday of any person, however great or significant he may be. The prophets of Allah are the persons of the highest status amongst all human beings. But the Holy Prophet, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam, or his noble companions never observed the birthday or anniversary of any of them. Even the birthday of the Holy Prophet, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam, which was the most happy day for the whole mankind was never celebrated by the Holy Prophet, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam, himself, nor by his blessed Companions.”

Regarding the first phrase: It is true that “Islam has not prescribed any festival for the birthday of any person” but nobody claimed it did. On the other hand, it is untrue that Islam has prescribed **not** to commemorate the birthday of any person, yet this is being claimed by the opponents of Mawlid. As for the rest of the paragraph it is false, since the Prophet ﷺ expressly commemorated his own birthday – as did the early Umma in his wake – by fasting every Monday. He ﷺ and they treated his birthday as the cause and driving factor (*‘illa*) for this act of devotion as shown in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* and as illustrated by the commentators of those narrations, among them Ibn Khuzayma and his student Ibn Ḥibbān, each one of them in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. And this suffices as evidence for those endowed with sight:

“[Subheading:] Mention of the Desirability of the Fast of Yawm al-Ithnayn BECAUSE (*li’anna*) on that Day was Born Rasūlullāh ﷺ and on that Day Descended upon Him the Beginning of Revelation.” *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān* (Arna’ūt ed. 8:403).

“Chapter of the Desirability of the Fast of Yawm al-Ithnayn SINCE (*idh*) the Prophet ﷺ was Born on Yawm al-Ithnayn and on that Day Revelation Came to Him and on that Day He Died.” *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Khuzayma* (A’zamī ed. 3:298).

Similarly, the ḥadīth Master and Ḥanbalī Imām, Ibn Rajab, said in his masterpiece on the devotions associated with each of the Islamic months titled *Latā’if al-Ma’ārif fīmā li Mawāsim al-‘Āmi min al-Waḍā’if* (“The Subtle Teachings Concerning the Devotions Pertaining to Each Season of the Year”):

In the statement of the Prophet ﷺ when he was asked about the fast of Yawm al-Ithnayn, “That is the day on which I was born, and on that

day Prophethood was sent down upon me”²¹ there is an indication that it is desirable to fast on the days in which the favors of Allāh ﷻ upon His servants renew themselves. Truly, the greatest of all the Divine favors to this Community is the manifestation of Muḥammad ﷺ to them, his mission and sending forth to them as the Most High said, **“Allah verily has shown grace to the believers by sending unto them a messenger of their own”** (3:164). For the favor of his being sent forth to the *Umma* is greater than the favor of causing the heaven to exist, the earth, the sun, the moon, the winds, the night, the day, rainfall, vegetation that sprouts, and other things.²²

9. **Mufti Taqī Usmānī said:** “In fact, commemorating the birth of a distinguished person has never been prescribed by any religion attributing itself to divine revelation. It was originally a custom prevalent in pagan communities only. Even Christmas, the famous Christian feast commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ finds no mention in the Bible or in the early Christian writings.”

Here we find three errors. First, and this is the gravest error, the author denies that the commemoration of the birth of a distinguished person was ever prescribed by any heavenly religion as if he never heard that the Prophet ﷺ was ordered to dismount from the Burāq during *Isrā’* and pray at the spot where ‘Isā ﷺ was born precisely for that reason and no other. The narration goes, “Then he ﷺ reached a land where the palaces of al-Shām became visible to him. Jibrīl said to him: ‘Alight and pray.’ He did so and remounted, then the Burāq continued his lightning flight and Jibrīl said: ‘Do you know where you prayed?’ He said no. Jibrīl said: ‘You prayed in Bayt Laḥm, where ‘Isā ibn Maryam عليهما السلام was born.”²³ Secondly, the prescription of the commemoration of the birth of Christ **was** prescribed in the early Christian Church, even if its chronological proximity to the pagan commemoration of the winter solstice was co-opted by the political authorities as a means to recycle prevalent social customs in certain regions including those of pagan origins. Thirdly, what flimsier way to adduce evidence is there than to cite tampered Scriptural texts in order to infer or disinfer a *Sharī’a* ruling? Is Mufti Taqī ‘Usmani a Christian or Jew addressing Christians or Jews?

²¹Narrated from Abū Qatāda by Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, Ahmad, and others.

²²Ibn Rajab, *Latā’if al-Ma’ārif* (p. 189).

²³Narrated as part of a longer ḥadīth from Anas by al-Nasā’ī with a sound chain and from Shaddād ibn Aws by al-Bayhaqī who declared it sound in *Dalā’il al-Nubuwwa* (2:355-357), and by al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Kabīr* and al-Bazzār with a sound chain as indicated by al-Haythamī in *Majma’ al-Zawā’id* and Ibn Hajar in *Mukhtasar Zawā’id Musnad al-Bazzār* (1:90-91 #32).

10. **Mufti Taqī Usmānī said:** “In original Islamic resources, also we cannot find any instruction about the celebration of birthdays or death anniversaries. Many Companions of the Holy Prophet, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam, passed away during his life-time. His beloved wife Sayyidah Khadījah, Radi-Allahu anha, passed away in Makkah. His beloved uncle Sayyidna Hamzah, Radi-Allahu anhu was brutally slaughtered during the battle of Uhud. But the Holy Prophet, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam, never observed their birthday or their death anniversaries, nor did he ever advise his followers to celebrate his own birthday in Rabi’ul-Awwal.”

The above again shows strange or rather tragic – for such a celebrated author – ignorance of the Sunna. We already established beyond doubt that the Prophet ﷺ celebrated his birthday by fasting. As for death anniversaries, the Prophet ﷺ definitely visited his wife and uncle’s graves on a regular basis as well as his mother’s. The Prophet ﷺ used to visit the graveyard of the martyrs of Uhud punctually at the end of every year (*‘alā ra’si kulli ḥawl*) together with Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, and ‘Uthmān.²⁴ Al-Bayhaqī and others narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said: “Whoever visits the grave of his parents or the grave of one of them every Jumu’a, he will be forgiven and be recorded among the pious sons” (*man zāra qabra abawayhi aw aḥadihimā fi kulli Jumu’a, ghufira lahu wa kutiba barran*).²⁵ And he ﷺ is without the shadow of a doubt the most pious of all pious sons. Also, al-Bazzār narrates that the Prophet ﷺ visited the Jannat al-Ma’lā graveyard in Makka, where his dear wife Sayyida Khadija was buried and called the whole place a blessed graveyard: “*Ni’ma al-maqbara hādhihi*.”²⁶ Imām Ja’far al-Ṣādiq narrated with his chain from al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī that Fāṭima the daughter of the Pro-

²⁴Narrated *mursal* from Muhammad ibn Ibrāhīm by al-Tabarī in his *Tafsīr* (13:142) cf. Ibn Kathīr’s (2:512) and al-Wāqidī in the *Siyar* as cited by Ibn Kathīr in *al-Bidāya*.

²⁵Narrated from Abū Hurayra by al-Tabarānī in *al-Awsat* (6:175 #6114), *al-Saghūr* (2:160 #955), and *al-Kabīr* with a weak chain because of ‘Abd al-Karīm Abū Umayya cf. al-Haythamī (3:59-60); Ibn Abī al-Dunyā in *Makārim al-Akhlāq* (p. 83) and al-Bayhaqī in *Shu’ab al-Imān* (6:201 #7901) with an incomplete *mu’dal* chain in addition to the fact that both their and al-Tabarānī’s chain contain Muhammad ibn al-Nu’mān who is unknown while his shaykh Yahyā ibn al-‘Alā’ al-Bajalī al-Rāzī is discarded as stated by al-‘Irāqī cf. al-Munāwī, *Fayd* (6:141). Cited by al-Hakīm al-Tirmidhī in *Nawādir al-Uṣūl* (*Asl* 15) and al-Suyūṭī in *al-Lum’a fi Khasa’is al-Jumu’a* (p. 109 #193).

²⁶Narrated from Ibn ‘Abbās by Ahmad, al-Bukhārī in *al-Tārīkh al-Kabīr* (1:284), ‘Abd al-Razzāq (3:579), Ibn Abī Hātim in his *‘Ilal* (2:270), and al-Tabarānī in *al-Kabīr* (11:137) with a strong chain cf. al-Haythamī (3:297-298) and Ibn Hajar in *Ta’jil al-Manfa’a*.

phet ﷺ used to visit every Jumu’a the grave of her uncle Hamza ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib – Allāh be well-pleased with all of them! – which she had marked with a rock in order to recognize it, and she used to pray and weep there as well as tend the grave.²⁷

11. **Mufti Taqī Usmānī said:** “The reason for abstinence from such celebrations is that they divert the attention of people from the real teachings of Islam towards the observance of some formal activities only. Initially, these celebrations may begin with utmost piety and with a bona fide intention to pay homage to a pious person.”

The above is speculation and has no place here. As for the latter sentence, it seems to come verbatim from the book of Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb titled *al-Tawhīd*. It was observed, furthermore, that the scholars of Deoband invited Indhira Ghandi – dressed in a Sarie – to their hundred year anniversary celebration of their Darul Uloom Deoband. She was seated on the stage while hundreds of Ulema were seated on the ground. Early Muslims did not celebrate the hundred year anniversary of the establishment of Islām although it was far more important that the establishment of Darul Uloom Deoband. Was this not an innovation?

12. **Mufti Taqī Usmānī said:** “Yet, the experience shows that the celebration is ultimately mixed up with an element of merrymaking and rejoicing and is generally confused with secular festivals and the secular, and often sinful, activities creep into it gradually. [Next paragraph:] The example of Christmas will again be relevant.”

All this shows how far from the principles of the *Sharī’a* one ends up when free rein is given to speculation and personal or regional pretexts at the expense of the authentic Sunna. There is “merrymaking and rejoicing” in the authentic Sunna. The Prophet ﷺ and the Companions definitely were not, as some seem to imagine, staid officials of rigid and censorious manners although they were the most dignified generation of human beings ever to walk the earth. They knew laughter, merriment, and good humor.

Nor is Usmani’s harping on “the example of Christmas” when referring to Muslims acceptable. One well-known contributor on an Islamic Usenet newsgroup said:

²⁷Narrated by al-Hakīm (1990 ed. 1:533, 3:30) who declared its chain sound, al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-Kubrā* (4:78), and Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr in *al-Tamhīd* (3:234) although al-Dhahabī condemns it strenuously while al-Bayhaqī alludes to its weakness.

I remember my first *‘Īd al-Fiṭr*, in Tucson. This was a largely student community, with a few older Muslims including professors at the University of Arizona at Tucson. My clearest memory is of the sub-teen daughters of some of these families getting up on the tables and dancing to the encouragement of nearly everyone, with drum music coming over the P.A. system. This was not *mawlid*, this was *‘Īd al-Fiṭr*! Times have changed. But it is not clear to me that the more sober *‘Īds* I have seen in recent years are closer to the actual sunna than that first *‘Īd*. I’ll leave it to someone else to cite the relevant ḥadīth; suffice it to say that the Prophet did, it appears, encourage having **fun** on *‘Īd*, and that dancing and at least some form of music were actually encouraged.²⁸

Following Mufti Taqī Usmānī’s reasoning in paragraph 12, if enough “bad” displays such as the above had been witnessed on *‘Īd*, then *‘Īd* celebrations should have been banned, either in absolute terms or in temporary and local terms. But isolated incidents are never a proof in ruling for or against something.

13. **Mufti Taqī Usmānī said:** “The Holy Qur’an has clearly pronounced on the occasion of the last Hajj of the Holy Prophet, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam: “Today, I have completed the teachings of your religion.” [Al-Maida 5:3] It means that all the teachings of Islam were communicated to the Muslims through the Holy Qur’an and the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam. No one is allowed after it to add any thing to them as a part of religion. What was not a part of religion during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam, can never become part of it. Such additions are termed by the Holy Prophet, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam, as Bid’ah or innovation.”

This is the weakest paragraph in the entire fatwa as it is entirely borrowed from the novel Wahhabi conception of *bid’a*, which violates the principles and methods of the *Jumhūr* of the Sunni Ulema as to what constitutes *bid’a* and what does not. The Ulema have clarified this major methodological innovation in many useful publications which we have summarized elsewhere and there is no space nor need to reproduce this material here. Suffice it here to quote the words of Sayyid Muḥammad al-Mālikī in one of his fatwas on Mawlid:

There is no doubt that such singing, dancing, reciting of poetry, and banging the drum [as narrated in the authentic Sunna] was for joy at

²⁸Abd al-Rahmān Lomax on the Usenet newsgroup soc.religion.islam, thread titled “Re: Al-Mawled (6/7): Even worse!” (22 September 1996).

being with the Prophet ﷺ, nor did he condemn nor frown upon such displays in any way whatsoever. These are common displays of happiness and lawful merriment, and similarly to stand up at the mention of the birth of the Prophet ﷺ is an ordinary act that shows love and gladness symbolizing the joy of creation: it does not constitute worship, nor law, nor Sunna!

It is also ironic that the verse they adduce **﴿This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favor unto you﴾** (5:3) was revealed on a Monday, the day of his *Mawlid* ﷺ according to some reports!²⁹

14. **Mufti Taqī Usmānī said:** “Thus, the observance of the 12th of Rabi’ul-Awwal as a religious feast is not warranted by any verse of the Holy Qur’an or by any teaching of the Holy Prophet, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam.”

The falsehood of the above statement is by now evident on the basis of what was already replied.

15. **Mufti Taqī Usmānī said:** “Had it been a part of the religion it would have been clearly ordered or practiced by the Holy Prophet, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam, and his blessed companions or, at least, by their immediate pupils. But no example of the celebration of the occasion can be traced out in the early centuries of the Islamic history.”

This is a needless repetition and stands refuted (see paragraphs #3, #13, and again #23).

16. **Mufti Taqī Usmānī said:** “It was after many centuries [Albalagh Note: According to Maulana Yusuf Ludhinavi it was in the year 604 A.H.] that some monarchs started observing the 12th of Rabi’ul-Awwal as the birthday of the Holy Prophet, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam, without a sound religious basis, and the congregations in the name of Maulood or Milad were held where the history of the birth of the Holy Prophet, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam, used to be narrated.”

As stated by al-Sayyid Muḥammad al-Mālikī in his Fatwa *Ḥawl al-Iḥtiṣāl bi Dhikrā al-Mawlid al-Nabawī al-Sharīf* (10th ed. p. 15): “The first to observe the celebration of the Mawlid was the Prophet ﷺ himself by fasting on Mondays because it was the day of his birth as narrated in *Ṣaḥīḥ*

²⁹Narrated by Ibn ‘Asākir as mentioned by al-Sālihī in *Subul al-Hudā* (1:401).

Muslim. This is the soundest and most explicit textual proof for the licitness of commemorating the Noble Prophetic Mawlid.”

In the light of such a proof what does it matter that “after many centuries some monarchs started observing the 12th of Rabi’ul-Awwal” as the Mawlid date, and who can believe such a lie as to claim that such observance was “without a sound religious basis”? Is this what the reliable authorities say, or is it just the opinion of some latecomers unfamiliar with the differences of the Ulema and the principles of the *Sharī‘a*?

Al-Dhahabī wrote in his *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’* (Arna’ut ed. 22:335-336):

He [Muẓaffar the King of Irbil] loved charity (*ṣadaqa*)... and built four hospices for the poor and sick... and one house for women, one for orphans, one for the homeless, and he himself used to visit the sick... He built a madrasa for the Shāfi‘īs and the Ḥanafīs... HE WOULD FORBID ANY REPREHENSIBLE MATTER TO ENTER HIS COUNTRY... As for his celebration of the noble *Mawlid al-Nabawī*, words are too poor to describe it! The people used to come all the way from Iraq and Algeria to attend it. Two wooden dais would be erected and decorated for him and his wife... the celebration would last several days, and a huge quantity of cows and camels would be brought out to be sacrificed and cooked in different ways... Preachers would roam the field exhorting the people. Great sums were spent. Ibn Diḥya compiled a “Book of *Mawlid*” for him for which he received 1,000 dinars. He [Muẓaffar] was modest, a LOVER OF GOOD, AND A TRUE SUNNĪ who loved the scholars of jurisprudence and scholars of ḥadīth, and was generous even to poets. He was killed in battle according to what is reported.

Similarly, Ibn Kathir said in *al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya* (Beirut and Riyadh: Maktabat al-Ma‘arif & Maktabat al-Nasr, 1966 ed. 13:136-137):

He [Muẓaffar] used to celebrate the noble *Mawlid* in Rabi‘ al-Awwal and organize huge festivities for it. He was a wise king, brave, a fierce fighter, intelligent, learned, and just. Allāh have mercy on him and ennoble his grave! Shaykh Abū al-Khaṭṭāb ibn Diḥya compiled for him a book on the *Mawlid* of the Prophet ﷺ and named it *al-Tanwīr fī Mawlid al-Bashīr al-Nadhīr* (“The Illumination Concerning the Birthday of the Bringer of Glad Tidings and Warner”) and the king rewarded him with 1,000 dinars for it. His rule lasted until he died in the year 630 [Hijri] as he was besieging the French in the city of Acca [Acre, Palestine] after a **glorious and blameless life**.

In the light of the above excerpts one can properly assess the ignorant statement of the so-called Majlis al-‘Ulamā of South Africa:

MAINTAINING A CUSTOM ORIGINATED BY IRRELIGIOUS PERSONS. It has already been explained elsewhere in this article that the originators of Meelad custom were irreligious persons. Six hundred years after our Nabi (sallal laahu alaihi wasallam), the irreligious ruler of Irbal, assisted by irreligious learned men, invented and established this custom. Thus, those who organize Meelad functions and those who participate in them are in reality assisting to establish a practise introduced by evil men. They are aiding and abetting in the fostering of a custom which is in total conflict with the Shari‘ah of Islam. It is a great crime to maintain and encourage customs and practices which were brought into being by those who had no connection with the Deen, more so, when these customs and practices are a conglomeration of un-Islamic elements.

More importantly, Ibn Kathīr himself composed a text on the *Mawlid* consisting in ḥadīths, invocations of blessings on the Prophet ﷺ, and poetry in praise of him, titled *Mawlid Rasūlillāh ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, edited and published by the historian and specialist of Imām al-Dhahabī, Dr. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid (Beirut: Dar al-Kitāb al-Jadīd, 1961).

17. **Mufti Taqī Usmānī said:** “The observance of the 12th of this month as the birthday of the Holy Prophet, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam, is not only an innovation having no basis in the Islamic teachings, but the accuracy of this date as the real birthday of the Holy Prophet, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam, is also very much doubted.”

Here the author contradicts what he had said in the first paragraph: “Rabi‘ al-Awwal is the most significant month in the Islamic history, because humanity has been blessed in this month by the birth of the Holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.” Does this not constitute “a basis in the Islamic teachings” since this Mufti deems himself one such basis and these are his words?

As for the specific date of the 12th, it is enough to quote the Qādī Ibn Jamā‘a in *Mukhtaṣar al-Siyar*: “The date of the 12th of Rabi‘ al-Awwal is the reference for the vast majority (*al-jumhūr*).”³⁰ Likewise, Imām Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī said in his book *Laṭā‘if al-Ma‘ārif* (p. 185): “The **vast majority** (*al-*

³⁰Cited by al-Khuzā‘ī in *Takhrīj al-Dilālāt al-Sam‘iyya* (p. 36-37).

jumhūr) hold that he ﷺ was born on the second day of the week (*al-Ithnayn* = “Monday”) 12 Rabi‘ al-Awwal... in the Year of the Elephant.” Ibn Kathīr states the same in the chapter on the Prophetic birth in his monumental history *al-Bidāya wal-Nihāya*. This is also stated in the *ḥāfiẓ* al-Ṣāliḥī’s monumental *Subul al-Hudā* (1:403).

So it is a good date for such a celebration because there is greater readiness for it in the hearts and minds of the people at that time; and, at the same time, as Sayyid Muḥammad al-Mālikī said, “we do **not** claim that it is Sunna to do celebrate the Mawlid on a specific night and whoever claims this has committed innovation in the Religion, because we should remember him (saws) at all times... although the reason to do so becomes stronger in the month of his birth due to the turning of people to that event and their gatherings and their feelings [at that time].”³¹

18. **Mufti Taqī Usmānī said:** “There are different dates suggested in different traditions, and the majority of the authentic scholars is inclined to hold that the Holy Prophet, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam, was born on the 9th of Rabi‘ul-Awwal.”

This is another half-truth in the light of the ḥadīth Masters Ibn Jamā‘a, Ibn Rajab, Ibn Kathīr, and al-Ṣāliḥī’s reports that the vast majority of the authorities settled on the twelfth! The foremost ḥadīth Master Ibn Ḥibbān said in the *Sīra* which he authored and placed at the beginning of his encyclopedia of trustworthy narrators titled *al-Thiqāt* (1:14-15): “The Prophet ﷺ was born the Year of the Elephant, the second day of the week (*al-ithnayn*), the 12th of the month of Rabi‘ al-Awwal” nor does he mention any other date.

Furthermore, by his words “the majority of the authentic scholars” Usmani apparently means four contemporaries: Dr. Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, Dr. Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī al-Nadwī, the Egyptian astronomer Maḥmūd Bāshā, and Muḥammad Sulayman al-Manṣūr Fūrī, the latter two footnoted in al-Nadwī’s *al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya* (p. 99)!

Nor has it been the *adab* of the true Ulema to misrepresent as incorrect or omit mentioning what the majority of the Ulema concur on as true and correct, as illustrated by the refined scholarly style of our teacher Dr. Nūr al-Dīn ‘Itr in mentioning both dates in his *Mawlid* book, *al-Nafaḥāt al-‘Itriyya fī Sīrati Khayr al-Bariyya* (p. 5-6): “He was born on the 9th of Rabi‘ al-

³¹ Al-Sayyid Muhammad al-Mālikī, *Maḥāḥim* (10th ed. p. 317).

Awwal according to the verification of some of the Imāms or on the 12th according to the most famous position (*al-mashhūr*) in the Umma.”

The Shaykh of Mount Tanalt – in the Great Atlas chain in South Morocco – al-Dādisī Muḥammad al-Ghālī did not even mention the 9th in his *Sīra* compendium *Laft al-Anzār ilā Qurrat al-Abṣār fī Sīrati al-Mushaffa ‘al-Mukhtār* (p. 38-39) but merely said: “[He ﷺ was born] on the day of al-Ithnayn in the most radiant month, on the 3rd or the 12th or the 8th of Rabi‘ al-Awwal.”

Nor does the ḥadīth Master al-Ṣāliḥī mention the 9th at all in his encyclopedia of all *Sīras*, *Subul al-Hudā wa al-Rashād fī Sīrati Khayri al-‘Ibād* (1:403) but only, in order of strength among the Ulema: the 12th, 8th [preferred by Ibn Ḥazm, al-Ḥumaydī, Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, Ibn Dihya, al-Quṭb al-Qastallānī, and Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Khwārizmī], 10th [preferred by Ibn Sa‘d, Badr al-Dīn al-Ḥalabī in *al-Muqtaḍā* (p. 30) and al-Dhahabī in the *Sīyar* (1:21) after his teacher Abū Muḥammad al-Dimyāṭī], 2nd [preferred by Ibn Kathīr in *al-Fuṣūl fī Ikhtisār Sīrat al-Rasūl* ﷺ (p. 79), 17th, 18th, or 1st of Rabi‘ al-Awwal.

The date of the 12th was also given precedence over all other dates by Ibn Shāhīn ‘Abd al-Bāsiṭ al-Ḥanaḥī in *Ghāyat al-Sūl fī Sīrat al-Rasūl* ﷺ (p. 30) and Dr. Muḥammad Abū Shuhba in his 1,400-page *al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya* (1:173) while Dr. Sa‘īd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī mentions the 12th exclusively of any other date in his *Fiqh al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya* (10th ed.).

The late Egyptian authority Shaykh Ṣādiq ‘Arjūn states in his monumental 2,600-page *Sīra*: “It is established as sound and authentic through many chains of transmission (*qad ṣaḥḥa min ṭuruqin kathīra*) that Mūḥammad ﷺ was born on the day of al-Ithnayn on the 12th day of the month of Rabi‘ al-Awwal of the Year of the Elephant in the time of Chosroes Anūsharwān.”³² Where, then, are the irresponsibly-claimed “majority of the authentic scholars”? Or are all the above Scholars frauds?

Furthermore, the author himself categorically stated at the beginning of his fatwa (item #1) that “Rabi‘ul-Awwal is the most significant month in Islamic history because humanity was blessed in this month by the birth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ” although there are also other months reported in the Sunna for the event of his noble birth, such as Ṣafar, Rajab, Ramaḍān, and Rabi‘ al-Thānī, cf. Ibn Rajab, *Laṭā‘if* (p. 184) and al-Haytamī, *al-Minah al-*

³² Arjūn, *Muhammadun Rasūlullāh* ﷺ (1:102).

Makkiyya (1:181). If the author does not know this discrepancy in relation to the month then perhaps there are gaps in his knowledge of the facts in relation to the day and other aspects as well. And if the author does know this discrepancy in relation to the months then why does he speak in categorical terms to affirm the month of Rabi‘ al-Awwal then turns dubious when it comes to the day of the 12th?

19. **Mufti Taqī Usmānī said:** “This difference of opinion is another evidence to prove that the observance of the birthday is not a part of the religion, otherwise its exact date would have been preserved with accuracy.”

This is another wholly original and innovative speculative analogy leading to a false proof without firm basis in the Religion, what is more, couched in unscholarly terminology – “not part of the Religion” – to avoid stating clearly once and for all if such an observance is permitted or not. There has been, many times, a difference of opinion in our times on the exact date of the beginning of the months of Ramaḍān and Dhūl-Ḥijja, but does this have any bearing whatsoever on the fact that fasting and pilgrimage are part of the Religion?!

In fact, not only the day, month, and (most emphatically) year of the Mawlid are generally agreed upon but the specific time of day when he ﷺ was born can also be known: according to the *Ghawth Sīdī* ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Dabbāgh in *al-Ibrīz*, the Prophet ﷺ was born in the last third of the night, and this is supported by al-Ḥākim’s narration from ‘Ā’isha and al-Ṭabarānī, al-Bayhaqī, and Ibn al-Sakan’s from Fāṭima bint ‘Abd Allāh al-Thaqāfiyya; although the Ḥadīth Master Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Irāqī in his *al-Mawrid al-Hanī fī al-Mawlid al-Sanī* adduces from the *Siyar* evidence that it took place in the daytime; and the *Sunan* state at noon – *mursal* from Sa‘īd ibn al-Musayyab – as well as Ibn Diḥya and al-Zarkashī in his *Sharḥ al-Burda*, but Allāh ﷻ knows best and the Prophet ﷺ knows best.

20. **Mufti Taqī Usmānī said:** “The narration of his pious biography (the Seerah) in itself is a pious act, which invites the divine blessings, but the Holy Qur’an and the Sunnah have not prescribed a particular time or method for it. This pious act should be performed in all the months and at all the times.”

According to Usmani’s own criterion, the above advice is an invitation to *bid’a* because conferences and talks about the *Sīra* have no precedent in the Sunna nor in the practice of the pious early centuries! However, the Sunna shows that the *Ṣaḥāba* would stand and declaim/sing poetry in praise

of the Prophet ﷺ and that he would reward them lavishly as he did with Ka‘b, ‘Abd Allah ibn Rawāḥa, Ḥassān ibn Thābit, Qurra ibn Hubayra and many others.

As for the assertion that “this pious act should be performed in all the months and at all the times” its absurdity is evident for all to see in light of the prohibition of the same act in the month of Rabi‘ al-Awwal and specifically the 12th of that month, although these two times fall within the time frame of “all the months and at all the times”!

21. **Mufti Taqī Usmānī said:** “The month of Rabi‘ul-Awwal has not been designated by the Shariah as a special season for holding such congregations to commemorate the birth or life of the Holy Prophet, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam.”

If someone repeats a false statement enough times, it might in the end pass for true among those whom Allah wishes to mislead, but not among those to whom He grants discernment.

22. **Mufti Taqī Usmānī said:** “It is thus an innovation (Bid’ah) to restrict the Seerah meetings to the month of Rabi‘ul Awwal only, or to believe that the meetings held in this month are worthy of more reward than the meetings held on any other date during the year.”

As was just replied, the *Sīra* meetings themselves are a *bid’a* according to this man’s own criterion. This new, imposed condition that such meetings must not be restricted to a particular month, shows that he readily considers those meetings a part of the *Sharī’a* when he himself said that Allāh ﷻ has completed the Religion, and such meetings were neither revealed to the Prophet ﷺ as part of it nor practiced by the early generations! And what is the status of someone who declares the belief of the vast majority of the Muslims a *bid’a*?

23. **Mufti Taqī Usmānī said:** “In fact, the Companions of the Holy Prophet, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam, used to commemorate the life of the Holy Prophet, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam, throughout the year, not only by studying and conveying his message to others, but also by following his way of life and acting upon his teachings in each and every branch of their activities, and this is exactly what a Muslim is required and supposed to do.”

The above shows that Mufti Taqī Usmānī admits that the principle of commemorating the life of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was alive and well among

the Companions and therefore not an innovation. However, he neglects to mention – or does not seem to know – that the Companions not only “studied” and “conveyed his ﷺ message to others,” but also recited and sang poetry in his honor both in his lifetime and after!

Would-be censors of *Mawlid* celebrations sometimes claim that “the Prophet ﷺ and the Companions never celebrated the Mawlid as it is celebrated today.” The reply is, nor did they ever pray as the people prayed in the time of the *Tābi‘īn*, let alone today! This kind of evidence never formed proof for the undesirability or prohibitiveness of anything in the Law, *Mawlid* or otherwise. This was demonstrated at length by al-Sayyid ‘Abd Allāh al-Ghumārī in his epistle *Husn al-Tafahhum wal-Dark li-Mas’alati al-Tark* (“Right Comprehension and Understanding the Issue of ‘Not Doing Something’”) – which he said he wrote upon the request of his student Shaykh Maḥmūd Sa‘īd Mamdūh – reprinted by Dar al-Awqāf in Dubai, United Arab Emirates and from which the Moroccan Shaykh Muḥtāyin al-Fārisī quoted the following excerpts:

Al-Tark – “not doing something” – can be of several types:

- (i) Out of custom or habit. Grilled desert lizard meat (*ḍabb*) was offered to the Prophet ﷺ and he stretched his noble hand to take some but when he heard that it was *ḍabb* lizard he withdrew his hand. Asked if such meat was prohibited, he replied: “No, but it is not found in the land of my people and I find it unappetizing (*ajidunī a ‘āfuhu*).”³³
- (ii) Out of forgetfulness. The Prophet ﷺ inadvertently omitted something in prayer. Asked if the prayer had changed, he said: “I am only a human being and I forget just as you forget. If I forget something, remind me [of it].”³⁴
- (iii) Lest a new obligation be imposed upon the *Umma*, for example the fact that the Prophet ﷺ stopped praying *tarāwīḥ* in congregation.³⁵

³³Narrated from Khālīd ibn al-Walīd by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, in the *Sunan*, and Ahmad.

³⁴Narrated from Ibn Mas‘ūd by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Nasā‘ī, Abū Dāwūd, Ibn Mājah, and Ahmad.

³⁵Narrated from ‘Ā’isha by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Mālik, al-Nasā‘ī, Abū Dāwūd, and Ahmad.

- (iv) Because the Prophet ﷺ did not give it any thought, as when he left the tree-stump and began to use a pulpit, whereupon the tree-stump was heard moaning until its voice was heard.³⁶
- (v) Because what is not being done nevertheless falls under the general meaning of a verse or ḥadīth. For example, his not practicing the *ḍuḥā* prayer and many of the recommended acts since they are comprised in the verse **﴿and do good, that perhaps you may prosper﴾** (22:77).
- (vi) Lest it adversely affect the hearts of some of his Companions. The Prophet ﷺ said to ‘Ā’isha: “Were it not for the recentness of the unbelief of your people, I would have razed the House and then rebuilt it on the foundation of Ibrāhīm ؑ, for the Quraysh fell short from rebuilding it completely.”³⁷

All this shows that not doing something does not mean prohibiting it.... Then what is wrong with those fastidious people today who categorically declare things to be prohibited and exaggerate their criticism of them without proof except their claim that the Prophet ﷺ did not do them! Whereas his ﷺ not doing them does not indicate prohibition nor even dislike.... Similarly, the Prophet ﷺ did not do the following things:

- (i) Celebrate the Prophetic *Mawlid* [in the fashion of later centuries];
- (ii) Celebrate of the Night of *Mi‘rāj*;

³⁶Narrated from Sahl ibn Sa‘d by al-Bukhārī and Muslim; from Jābir and Ibn ‘Umar by al-Bukhārī and Ahmad; from Burayda and from Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī by al-Dārimī; from Ibn ‘Abbās by al-Dārimī, Ahmad, and Ibn Mājah; from Anas by al-Tirmidhī (*hasan ṣaḥīḥ gharīb*), Ahmad, and Ibn Mājah; from Umm Salama by al-Bayhaqī in *Dalā’il al-Nubuwwa*; from Ubay ibn Ka‘b by al-Shāfi‘ī, Ahmad, al-Dārimī, Ibn Mājah, Abū Ya‘lā, and Sa‘īd ibn Mansūr. This ḥadīth is mass-narrated (*mutawātir*) cf. ‘Iyād in *al-Shifā’* (chapter on the miracles of the Prophet ﷺ), Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī in *Sharḥ Mukhtasar Ibn al-Hājib*, al-Suyūṭī in *al-Azhār al-Mutanāthira*, and al-Kattānī in *Nazm al-Mutanāthir* while ‘Abd al-Ra‘ūf al-Munāwī in his commentary on al-‘Irāqī entitled *Sharḥ Alfiyyat al-Siyar* said it is mass-narrated in meaning (*mutawātir al-ma‘nā*), as indicated by al-Bayhaqī in *Dalā’il al-Nubuwwa* and Ibn Hajar in *Fath al-Bārī*. Cf. al-Ghumārī, *al-Ibtihāj* (p. 167-168).

³⁷Narrated from ‘Ā’isha by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Nasā‘ī, Ahmad, and al-Dārimī.

- (iii) Accompany the bier while raising loud *dhikr*;
- (iv) Recite the Qur'ān upon the dead inside houses;
- (v) Recite the Qur'ān upon the dead at the graveyard before and after burial;
- (vi) Perform *Tarāwīḥ* prayer with more than eight *rak'as*.

Whoever prohibits any of the above or the like of them by claiming that the Prophet ﷺ did not do them, recite against them the verse **﴿Has Allāh permitted you or do you invent a lie concerning Allāh?﴾** (10:59).... And the Prophet ﷺ said: “All that I said nothing about is forgiven” (*wamā sakattu ‘anhu ‘afwun*),³⁸ meaning permitted.³⁹

24. **Mufti Taqī Usmānī said:** “By this we do not mean that the Seerah meetings should not be held in the month of Rabi’ul-Awwal. The point is only that they should not be restricted to it, nor should it be believed that the Shariah has laid any kind of emphasis on holding such meetings in this particular month.”

It is incorrect to forbid certain good deeds on the basis that people customarily restrict them to a specific period of time. It would have been correct to let those who wish hold them in Rabi’ al-Awwal and let those who wish hold them in any other month. **﴿And for this let all those strive who strive for bliss﴾** (83:26). Furthermore, the objecter himself said in the beginning of his misguided fatwa, “Rabi’ul-Awwal is the most significant month in the Islamic history” and we already cited the Prophetic narration encouraging the observance of significant historical moments in the Islamic

year: “Your Lord truly has, in the days of your history, blessed breezes. Do expose yourselves to the blessed breezes of your Lord!”⁴⁰

25. **Mufti Taqī Usmānī said:** “It is often observed, especially in the Western countries, that the people hold the Seerah meetings where men and women sit together without observing the rules of hijab prescribed by the Shariah. The teachings of the Holy Prophet, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam, are obviously against such mixed gatherings. How can a Seerah meeting bring fruits where such fundamental teachings of the Shariah are openly violated?”

This never invalidates the ruling of desirability that applies to the principle. The desirable remains desirable even if inter-mixed with reprehensible innovations. There were idols in the Ka’ba before Makka was conquered but Muslims did not leave out performing circumambulation or ‘Umra because of the idols! When people go to pilgrimage, there is inter-mingling of sexes at the airport, in the plane, during circumambulation, at Minā and at Muzdalifa, yet no one puts a stop to *Hajj*! Ibn ‘Ābidīn said in his *Hāshiya*, book of *Janā’iz*, in his discussion on visiting graves:

Ibn Hajar [al-Haytamī] said in his *Fatāwā*: “One must not leave [the visitation of graves] just because some reprehensible and unlawful activities take place such as inter-mingling of sexes and other things. For pious acts (*qurubāt*) should not be left out just because of such activities. rather, it is necessary for people to visit the graves *and* speak out against innovations and stop them if possible.” This is confirmed by the fact that we should not stop following the bier even if there are women and professional female mourners present.⁴¹

26. **Mufti Taqī Usmānī said:** “In some meetings the Na’ts (poems) in the memory of the Holy Prophet, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam, are recited by the women before the male audience, sometimes with music, which is totally against the instructions of the Holy Prophet, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam. It is clearly prohibited by the Shariah to hold such meetings or to participate in them, because it is not only a violation of the Shariah rules, but it is an affront to the sanctity of the Seerah of the Holy Prophet, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam.”

This has already been answered in the previous paragraph but we might add that the Prophet ﷺ on so many public and private occasions heard

³⁸Narrated from Abū al-Dardā’ by al-Hākim (1990 ed. 2:406) who declared it *sahīh al-ishnād* and by al-Bazzār and al-Tabarānī in *al-Kabīr* with a fair chain cf. al-Haythamī (1:171 and 7:55); from Salmān by al-Tirmidhī (*gharīb*), Ibn Mājah, and al-Bayhaqī in *al-Sunan al-Kubrā* (10:12); *mawqūf* (with the verb “say” in the third person) from Ibn ‘Abbās by Abū Dāwūd with a sound chain, Ibn Abī Shayba (4:259), al-Hākim (1990 ed. 2:347 and 4:128), al-Bayhaqī in the *Sunan* (9:330), and Ibn Hazm in the *Muhallā* (7:436-437); and *maqtū’* from the *Tābi’ī* ‘Ubayd ibn ‘Umayr by ‘Abd al-Razzāq (4:534 #8767). This is a rule of law, cf. al-Shāfi‘ī, *Risāla* (p. 201) and Ibn Hazm, *Ihkām* (8:508).

³⁹‘Abd Allāh al-Ghumārī, *Husn al-Tafahhum* as quoted in Muhtāyin al-Fārisī, *al-Nūr al-Lāmi* (p. 60-61). It is strange that al-Ghumārī added “extra worship in the night of mid-Sha’bān” among the things the Prophet ﷺ did not do, as this is patently incorrect.

⁴⁰Cf. note 19.

⁴¹Ibn ‘Ābidīn, *Hāshiya* (1386/1966 ed. 2:242).

female singers and did not stop them from their activity as long as what they were reciting was approved by the law, namely *na'at*.

27. Mufti Taqī Usmānī said: “All other activities, often practiced on the twelfth of Rabi‘ul-Awwal, like holding processions, constructing the mock tombs of the Holy Prophet, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam, and illumination of the buildings and the roads are not warranted by any rule of the Shariah. Rather they are based on conscious or unconscious imitation of certain other religions. No example of such activities can be traced out from the earlier Islamic history.”

It seems that in this single fatwa the author multiplies the indications that his knowledge of Islamic history, the Sunna, the *Sīra*, and the principles of the *Sharī‘a* is full of gaps. Following are examples of the public celebration of the Mawlid from the sixth to the tenth centuries, some of them comprising most of the elements that Usmani claims were never present in earlier Islamic history:

– Ibn Jubayr (540-614) wrote in his *Riḥal* (“Travels”), p. 114-115: “This blessed place [the house of the Prophet] is opened, and all men enter it to derive blessing from it (*mutabarrikin bihi*), on every Monday of the month of Rabi‘ al-Awwal; for on that day and in that month was born the Prophet.”

– The 7th-century historians Abul ‘Abbās al-‘Azafī and his son Abul Qāsim al-‘Azafī wrote in their unpublished *al-Durr al-Munazzam*: “Pious pilgrims and prominent travellers testified that, on the day of the mawlid in Mecca, no activities are undertaken, and nothing is sold or bought, except by the people who are busy visiting his noble birthplace, and rush to it. On this day the Ka‘ba is opened and visited.”

– The famous eighth-century historian Ibn Baṭṭūta relates in his *Riḥla* (1:309 and 1:347), that on every Friday, after the salat, and on the birthday of the Prophet, the door of Ka‘ba is opened by the head of the Banū Shayba, the doorkeepers of the Ka‘ba, and that on the Mawlid, the Shāfi‘ī qāḍī of Makka, Najm al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn al-Imām Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Ṭabarī, distributes food to the *shurafā’* (descendants of the Prophet) and to all the other people of Mecca.

– The historian Ibn Zahrā in his *al-Jāmi‘ al-Laṭīf fī Faḍli Makkata wa Ahlihā* (p. 326), Shaykh al-Islām al-Haytamī in *al-Jawhar al-Munazzam fī Ziyārat al-Qabr al-Mukarram*, and the historian Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Nahrawālī al-Makkī al-Ḥanafī (d. 988) in *al-*

I‘lām bi-A‘lām Bayt Allāh al-Ḥarām (p. 205) said that each year on the 12th of Rabi‘ al-Awwal, after the Maghrib prayer, the four qāḍīs of Makka – representing the Four Schools – and large groups of people including the *fuqahā’* and notables (*fuḍalā’*) of Makka, Shaykhs, *zāwiya* teachers and their students, magistrates (*ru‘asā’*), and Scholars (*muta‘ammamūn*) leave the mosque and set out collectively for a visit to the birthplace of the Prophet, raising *dhikr* and *tahlīl*. The houses on the route are illumined with numerous lanterns and large candles, and a great many people are out and about. They all wear their best attire and take their children with them. Having reached the birthplace, inside a special sermon for the occasion of the birthday of the Prophet ﷺ is delivered, mentioning the miracles (*karamāt*) that took place on that occasion. Then the *du‘ā’* for the Sultan (*i.e.* the Caliph), the Emir of Makka, and the Shāfi‘ī qāḍī is performed and all pray humbly. Shortly before the Ṣalāt al-‘Ishā’, the whole party returns from the birthplace of the Prophet ﷺ to the Great Mosque, which is almost overcrowded, and all sit down in rows at the foot of the Maqām Ibrāhīm. In the mosque, a preacher first mentions the *taḥmīd* and the *tahlīl*, and once again the *du‘ā’* for the Sultan, the Emir, and the Shāfi‘ī qāḍī is performed. After this the call for Ṣalāt al-‘Ishā’ is made. After the Ṣalāt, the crowd breaks up.

– A similar description is given by al-Diyarbakrī (d. 960) in his massive *Sīra* titled *Ta’rikh al-Khamīs fī Khabari Anfasi Naḥḥis*.

28. Mufti Taqī Usmānī said: “What is really important with regard to the Holy Prophet, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam, is, first, to follow his teachings, and second to make his pious Seerah available to every Muslim, to preserve it in the hearts of the Muslims from the very childhood, to educate the family members to run their lives according to it and to hold it as the most glorious example of the human conduct the universe has ever witnessed -- and all this with utmost love and reverence, not manifested by some formal activities only, but also through actual behavior of following the Sunnah.”

There is nothing in the principle of Mawlid gatherings, Qur’ān and *Na‘at* recitation, and distribution of food and sweets except what follows the Prophetic teachings, increases knowledge of his *Sīra* among the Muslims, stimulates love for him ﷺ in their hearts, and encourages them to educate their families according to Islamic principles from the cradle to the grave, “with utmost love and reverence, not manifested by some formal activities only, but also through actual behavior of following the Sunnah”!

29. **Mufti Taqī Usmānī said:** “This cannot be done by merely holding processions and illuminating the walls. This requires constant and consistent efforts and a meaningful program of education and training.”

No-one disagrees with the above paragraph but the rest of the fatwa is mostly wrong and should be ignored. Blessings and peace on our Master the Messenger of Allāh, his Family, and all his Companions, and praise belongs to Allāh, the Lord of the worlds.

“Hādir Nāzir” ﷺ and Standing During Mawlid⁴²

Hadara hudūran wa hadāratān: diddu ghāba... wahuwa hādirun min huddarin wa hudūrin.

“To be present (*hadara*)... is the opposite of being absent... said of the attendee (*hādir*) among other attendees.”
Al-Fayruzābādī, *al-Qāmūs al-Muhīt*, s.v. *h-d-r*.

“[After the Prophet ﷺ entered *Barzakh*] no time and no place is devoid of him ﷺ – both in body and spirit.”
Ibn ‘Allān, *Ithāf Ahl al-Īmān*.⁴³

صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَى آلِهِ فِي كُلِّ مَحْفَلٍ وَمَقَامٍ

“Allāh send blessings upon him and his Family in every gathering and place of standing!”
Al-Jazūlī, *Dalā’il al-Khayrāt*. (*Ḥizb Yawm al-Aḥad*)

Ibn Khafīf al-Shīrāzī said in his *al-‘Aqīda al-Ṣaḥīḥa* (§48):

[The Prophet ﷺ] is knower of what is and what shall be and he gave news of the Unseen (*wa [ya ‘taqīdu] annahu al-‘ālimu bimā kāna wa mā yakūnu wa akhbāra ‘an ‘ilmi al-ghayb*).

⁴²This section complements the material adduced in the section titled “The Prophet’s Knowledge of the Unseen” in the third volume of the *Encyclopedia of Islamic Doctrine*.

⁴³Ibn ‘Allān, *Ithāf Ahl al-Īmān fī anna al-Nabīyya* ﷺ *lā yakhlū ‘anhu zamānun aw makān*. Zāhiriyya ms. 9276 f°157b-164b cf. Riyād Mālīh, *Fahras Makhtūtāt al-Tasawwuf fī al-Maktabat al-Zāhiriyya* (1:4 #4).

Meaning, in the sense of being imparted by Allāh whatever He imparted to him. Our teacher the *Faqīh* of Damascus Shaykh Adīb Kallās said: “Note that Ibn Khafīf did not say ‘He knows all that is and all that shall be.’”

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Hādī Kharsa told us:

The Prophet ﷺ possesses knowledge of all that is and knows the created universes in the same way that one knows a room in which one sits. Nothing is hidden from him. There are two verses of the Holy Qur’ān that affirm this, ﴿But how (will it be with them) when we bring of every people a witness, and We bring you (O Muḥammad) a witness against these﴾ (4:41) and ﴿Thus We have appointed you a middle nation, that you may be witnesses against mankind and that the messenger may be a witness against you﴾ (2:143) nor can the Prophet ﷺ be called to witness over what he does not know nor see.

Shaykh Ismā‘īl al-Ḥaqqī said in his monumental *Tafsīr*:

The meaning of the witnessing of the Messenger ﷺ over them is his familiarity with the rank of each of those that profess Religion and the actuality of his belief and practice as well as the veils that veil him from the perfection of his Religion. So he [the Prophet ﷺ] knows their sins, the reality of their belief, their works, their good and bad deeds, their sincerity, their hypocrisy, and other matters, through the light of truth, while his Community know this about the other Communities through his light.⁴⁴

Al-Qārī said something similar in his *Mirqāt*: “﴿A witness against you﴾ (2:143), meaning, cognizant and observant of you, looking at your deeds, and sanctioning your words” (*ay muṭṭali‘an wa-raqīban ‘alaykum wa-nāẓiran li-af‘ālikum wa-muzakkiyan li-aqwālikum*).⁴⁵

Many of the commentaries for this verse echo the same or a similar understanding for the Prophetic attribute of ﴿witness﴾: “A voucher and guarantor” (al-Baghawī); “Like the overseeing guardian (*al-raqīb al-muḥaymin*) of his Community” (al-Bayḍāwī); “a witness over your deeds on the day of Resurrection” (al-Qurṭubī, al-Kalbī); “A guarantor who knows your uprightness” (al-Nasafī, al-Alūsī); “That is, having knowledge and being present over the condition, truthfulness and lies, salvation, and destruction of

⁴⁴Ismā‘īl Haqqī, *Rūḥ al-Bayān* (orig. ed. 1:168 = 1:248).

⁴⁵Al-Qārī, *al-Mirqāt* (Dār al-Fikr 1994 ed. 9:493 = Imdādiyya Maltān (Pakistan) ed. 10:263-264 = Cairo 1892 ed. 5:245).

the *Umma*” (‘Abd al-Haqq Muḥaddith Dihlawī, *Madārij al-Nubuwwa* 1:260). Identical or similar commentaries are found for the attribute of *shahīd* in the verse **﴿O Prophet, we have sent you as a witness﴾** (33:45).

The above understanding is confirmed by the authentic Prophetic narration from Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Sunan*, and *Masānid*:

The Prophet ﷺ said: “Nūḥ and his Community shall come <also: ‘shall be brought’> and Allāh ﷻ shall say: ‘Did you convey [My Message]?’ He shall say, ‘Yes, indeed! my Lord.’ Then He shall ask his Community, ‘Did he convey [My Message] to you?’ and they shall say, ‘No, no Prophet came to us.’ Then Allāh shall ask Nūḥ, ‘Who is your witness?’ and he shall reply, ‘Muḥammad ﷺ and his Community.’ Then we shall bear witness that he conveyed [the Message] indeed, and this is [the meaning of] His saying, **﴿Thus We have appointed you a middle nation (ummataṇ wasaṭan), that you may be witnesses against mankind﴾** (2:143), *al-wasaṭ* meaning ‘the upright’ (*al-‘adl*).”⁴⁶

Ibn Ḥajar in his commentary of the above narration in *Fath al-Bārī* said that another same-chained, similar narration in Aḥmad and Ibn Mājah shows that such witnessing applies to all the Communities and not just that of Nūḥ:

The Prophet ﷺ said: “One Prophet will come on the Day of Resurrection with a single man [as his Community]; another Prophet will come with two men; others, with more. The nation of each Prophet will be summoned and asked, ‘Did this Prophet convey [the Message] to you?’ They will reply, no. Then he will be asked, ‘Did you convey [the Message] to your people?’ and he will reply, yes. Then he will be asked, ‘Who is your witness?’ and he will reply, ‘Muḥammad and his Community.’ Whereupon Muḥammad and his Community will be summoned and asked, ‘Did this man convey [the Message] to his people?’ They will reply, yes. They will be asked, ‘How do you know?’ They will reply, ‘Our Prophet came to us and told us that the Messengers have indeed conveyed [the Message].’ This is [the meaning of] His saying, **﴿Thus We have appointed you a middle nation﴾** – He means upright (*yaqūlu ‘adlan*) – **﴿that you may be witnesses against mankind and that the messenger may be a witness against you﴾** (2:143).”

Al-Qārī said in commentary of the narration of Nūḥ ﷺ cited in *Mishkat al-Maṣābiḥ*:

⁴⁶Narrated by al-Bukhārī with three chains, al-Tirmidhī (*ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ*), and Aḥmad.

“And he will reply, ‘Muḥammad and his Community’” means that his Community are witnesses while he vouches for them, but his mention came first out of reverence (*lil-ta‘zīm*). It is possible that he ﷺ too witnesses for Nūḥ ﷺ since it is a context of help and Allāh ﷻ said **﴿When Allāh made (His) covenant with the Prophets﴾** until He said **﴿you shall believe in him and you shall help him﴾** (3:81). In this there is a remarkable warning that the Prophet ﷺ is present and witnessing in that Greatest Inspection (*waḥīhi tanbīhun nabīhun annahu ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa ṣallama ḥāḍirun nāẓirun fī dhālika al-‘arḍi al-akbar*), when the Prophets are brought, Nūḥ being the first, and the latter’s witnesses are brought, namely, this Community.⁴⁷

There are other verses that affirm that the Prophet ﷺ hears and sees the deeds of human beings. Allāh ﷻ said: **﴿And know that the Messenger of Allāh is among you﴾** (49:7). In the verses **﴿Allāh and His Messenger will see your conduct﴾** (9:94) and **﴿Act! Allāh will behold your actions, and (so will) His Messenger and the believers﴾** (9:105), the Prophet’s ﷺ perception is put on a par with that of the Lord of the worlds Who sees and encompasses all on the one hand and, on the other, that of all the living believers.

Yet another narration from Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī on the same verse of witnessing (2:143) states: “So that the Prophet ﷺ will be a witness over you in what you have done.”⁴⁸

Shaykh ‘Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Ghumārī said:

The saying of Allāh ﷻ **﴿O you who believe! Observe your duty to Allāh, and give up what remains (due to you) from usury, if you are (in truth) believers. And if you do not, then be warned of war (against you) from Allāh and His Messenger﴾** (2:278-279) indicates that the Prophet ﷺ is alive in his noble grave, fighting the usurers with his supplication against them or with whatever suits his isthmus-life. I do not know anyone that inferred this from the verse before me.⁴⁹

The above is further confirmed in the Sunna by (1) the authentic narration of the Prophet’s ﷺ witnessing of all the deeds of the Umma from his *Barzakh* in the ḥadīth, “My life is an immense good for you, you will narrate [about me] and it will be narrated to you. And my death is an immense good

⁴⁷Al-Qārī, *Ibid*.

⁴⁸Narrated by al-Tabarī in his *Tafsīr* (2:8).

⁴⁹‘Abd Allāh al-Ghumārī, *Khawātir Dīniyya* (1:19).

for you, your actions will be exhibited to me, and if I see goodness I shall praise Allāh, and if I see evil I shall ask forgiveness of Him for you.”⁵⁰ (2) the narration of “the Highest Company” (*al-mala’u al-a’lā*): “My Lord came to me in the best form” – the narrator said: “I think he said: ‘in my sleep’” – “and asked me over what did the Highest Assembly (*al-mala’u al-a’lā*)⁵¹ vie; I said I did not know, so He put His hand between my shoulders, and I felt its coolness in my innermost, and knowledge of all things between the East and the West came to me.”⁵² And (3) the staying back of Sayyidina Gibrīl

⁵⁰Narrated from Ibn Mas’ūd by al-Bazzār in his *Musnad* (5:308-309 #1925) with a sound chain of trustworthy narrators as stated by al-Suyūṭī in *Manāhil al-Safā* (p. 31 #8) and *al-Khasā’is al-Kubrā* (2:281), al-Haythamī (9:24 #91), al-Zurqānī in *Sharh al-Muwatta’a* (1:97), and al-‘Irāqī in *Tarh al-Tathrib* (3:297) – his last book, as opposed to *al-Mughnī ‘an Haml al-Asfār* (4:148) where he questions the trustworthy rank of one of the narrators in al-Bazzār’s chain cf. al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf* (9:176-177). Shaykh ‘Abd Allāh al-Talīdī said in his *Tahdhīb al-Khasā’is al-Kubrā* (p. 458-459 #694) that this chain is sound according to Muslim’s criterion, and Shaykh Mahmūd Mamdūh in *Raf’ al-Mināra* (p. 156-169) discusses it at length and also declares it sound. Their shaykh, al-Sayyid ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Siddīq al-Ghumārī (d. 1413/1993) declared it sound in his monograph *Nihāyat al-Amal fī Sharh wa Tashīh Hadīth ‘Ard al-A’ māl*.

Shaykh Hasanayn Muhammad Makhlūf wrote in his *Fatāwā Shar’iyya* (1:91-92): “The hadīth means that the Prophet ﷺ is a great good for his Community during his life, because Allāh the Exalted has preserved the Community, through the secret of the Prophet’s ﷺ presence, from misguidance, confusion, and disagreement, and He has guided the people through the Prophet ﷺ to the manifest truth; and that after Allāh took back the Prophet ﷺ, our connection to the latter’s goodness continues uncut and the extension of his goodness endures, overshadowing us. The deeds of the Community are shown to him every day, and he glorifies Allāh for the goodness that he finds, while he asks for His forgiveness for the small sins, and the alleviation of His punishment for the grave ones; and this is a tremendous good for us. There is therefore ‘goodness for the Community in his life, and in his death, goodness for the Community.’ Moreover, as has been established in the hadīth, the Prophet ﷺ is alive in his grave with a special ‘isthmus-life’ stronger than the lives of the martyrs which the Qur’ān spoke of in more than one verse. The nature of these two kinds of life cannot be known except by their Bestower, the Glorious, the Exalted. He is able to do all things. His showing the Community’s deeds to the Prophet ﷺ as an honorific gift for him and his Community is entirely possible rationally and documented in the reports. There is no leeway for its denial; and Allāh guides to His light whomever He pleases; and Allāh knows best.”

⁵¹I.e. “the angels brought near” according to Ibn al-Athīr in *al-Nihāya* and others.

⁵²Narrated by al-Tirmidhī with three chains: two from Ibn ‘Abbās – in the first of which he said “the knowledge of all things in the heaven and the earth” while he graded the second *ḥasan gharīb* – and one chain from Mu’adh (*ḥasan ṣaḥīh*) which explicitly mentions that this took place in the Prophet’s ﷺ sleep. Al-Bukhārī declared the latter chain *ḥasan ṣaḥīh* as reported by al-Tirmidhī in both his *Sunan* and *‘Ilal*, and it towers over all other chains, according to Ibn Hajar in *al-Isāba* (2:397), in the facts that there is no discrepancy over it among the hadīth scholars and its text is undisputed (cf. *Asmā’* Hāshidī ed. 2:78). Also narrated by Ahmad with four sound chains according to the typically lax grading of Shākir and al-Zayn: one from Ibn ‘Abbās with the words “I think he said: ‘in my sleep’” (Shākir ed. 3:458 #3484=al-

at the point the Prophet ﷺ went beyond the Lote-Tree of the Farthestmost Boundary (*sidrat al-muntahā*) and heard the screeching of the pens writing the Foreordained Decree then saw his Lord,⁵³ although Gibrīl is the closest of all creatures to Allāh ﷻ and the angels do see Him according to *Ahl-al-Sunna*.⁵⁴

Arna’ūt ed. 5:437-442 #3483 *isnāduhu da’if*); one from Mu’adh which Ahmad explicitly declared *ṣaḥīh* as narrated by Ibn ‘Adī in *al-Kāmil* (6:2244), with the words: “I woke up and lo! I was with my Lord” (al-Zayn ed. 16:200 #22008); and two from unnamed Companions in which no mention is made of the Prophet’s ﷺ sleep or wakefulness (al-Zayn ed. 13:93-94 #16574=al-Arna’ūt ed. 27:171-174 #16621 *isnāduhu da’if mudtarib*; al-Zayn ed. 16:556 #23103). Al-Haythamī declared the latter sound as well as other chains cited by al-Tabarānī in *al-Kabīr* (20:109 #216, 20:141 #290) and al-Bazzār in his *Musnad*, and he declared fair the chain narrated from Abū Umāma by al-Tabarānī in *al-Kabīr* (8:290 #8117). See *Majma’ al-Zawā’id* (7:176-179). Shaykhs ‘Abd al-Qādir and Shu’ayb al-Arna’ūt both declared *ṣaḥīh* the seven narrations of al-Tirmidhī and Ahmad in their edition of Ibn al-Qayyim’s *Zād al-Ma’ād* (3:33-34 n. 4). Also narrated from Jābir ibn Samura by Ibn Abī ‘Āsim in *al-Sunna* (p. 203 #465 *isnād ḥasan*). Also narrated from ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn ‘Ā’ish by al-Dārimī in his *Musnad* (2:170 #2149), Ibn Abī ‘Āsim through two chains in *al-Āḥād wa al-Mathānī* (5:48-50 #2585-2586) and al-Tabarānī in *Musnad al-Shāmiyyīn* (1:339 #597), and from Umm al-Tufayl by Ibn Abī ‘Āsim in *al-Āḥād* (6:158 #3385). The latter chain actually states: “I saw my Lord in the best form of a beardless young man” and was rejected by al-Dhahabī in *Tahdhīb al-Mawdu’āt* (p. 22 #22). Also narrated from the Companion Abū Rafī’ [*al-Isāba* 7:134 #9875] by al-Tabarānī in *al-Kabīr* (1:317 #938). Also narrated from Ibn ‘Abbās by Abū Ya’lā in his *Musnad* (4:475 #2608). Some fair narrations of this hadīth – such as al-Tabarānī’s from ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn ‘Ayyāsh and al-Khatīb’s from Abū ‘Ubayda ibn al-Jarrāh in *Tārikh Baghdād* (8:151) – have the words: “I saw my Lord” instead of “My Lord came to me,” hence Ibn Kathīr’s conclusion previously cited. Al-Ahdab in *Zawā’id Tārikh Baghdād* (6:251-253) and al-Haythamī also cited Abū ‘Ubayda ibn al-Jarrāh, Ibn ‘Umar, Abū Hurayra, Anas, Thawbān, and Abū Umāma which brings to at least eleven (without Umm al-Tufayl) the number of Companions who narrated this hadīth. The various chains and narrations of this hadīth were collated and discussed by Ibn Rajab in his monograph *Ikhtiyār al-Awlā*. See also Ibn Athīr, *Jāmi’ al-Uṣūl* (9:548-550). Among those that considered this hadīth as falling below the grade of *ṣaḥīh* are al-Bayhaqī in *al-Asmā’ wa al-Sifāt* (Kawtharī ed. p. 300, Hāshidī ed. 2:72-79), Ibn al-Jawzī in *‘Ilal al-Mutanāhiya* (1:34), Ibn Khuzayma in *al-Tawhīd* (p. 214-221) and al-Dāraqutnī in his *‘Ilal* (6:56). Al-Saqqāf in his misnamed *Aqwāl al-Huffāz al-Manthūra li Bayān Wad’i Hadīth Ra’aytu Rabbī fī Ahsani Sūra*, appended to his edition of Ibn al-Jawzī’s *Daf’ Shubah al-Tashbīh*, claims that it is forged.

⁵³“*Farafadanī Gibrīl*” in Ibn Abī Hātim and Ibn Kathīr’s *Tafsīrs*, while al-Salihi in *Subul al-Hudā* (3:129) has “*Fata’ akhkhara Gibrīl*” – both meaning “he left me and stayed back.” Cf. al-Mālikī, *Wa Huwa bil-Ufuqi al-A’la* (p. 73, 279) and *al-Anwar al-Bahīyya* (p. 75-77).

⁵⁴See Abū al-Shaykh, *al-‘Azama* and al-Suyūṭī, *al-Habā’ik*. Cf. our article on the precedence and preferability of the Prophet ﷺ over all creation titled *Afdalu al-Khalq*.

Al-Qāḍī ‘Iyād in *al-Shifā*, in the section titled “Concerning the places where it is desirable to invoke blessings and peace upon him” cited from ‘Amr ibn Dīnār al-Athram (d. 126) the explanation of the verse **“when you enter houses salute one another”** (24:61): “If there is no one in the house then say: ‘*as-salāmu ‘alā al-Nabiyyi wa rahmatullāhi wa barakātuh*.’”⁵⁵

Al-Qārī said in his commentary on *al-Shifā*: “Meaning, because his soul ﷺ is present in the house of the Muslims (*ay li’anna rūḥahu ‘alayhi al-salāmu ḥāḍirun fī buyūt al-muslimīn*).”⁵⁶

What ‘Iyād cited from al-Athram is only narrated by al-Ṭabarī in his *Tafsīr* from Ibn Jurayj, from ‘Aṭā’ al-Khurāsānī (d. 135):

Hajjāj narrated to me from Ibn Jurayj: I said to ‘Aṭā’: “What if there is no one in the house?” He said: “Give *salām*! Say, *al-salāmu ‘alā al-Nabiyyi wa rahmatullāhi wa barakātuh*, *al-salāmu ‘alaynā wa ‘alā ‘ibādillah al-sālīhīn*, *al-salāmu ‘alā ahli al-bayti wa rahmatullāh*.” I said: “This statement you just said about my entering the house in which there is no one, from whom did you receive it?” He replied: “I heard it without receiving it from anyone in particular.”⁵⁷

‘Aṭā’ was a pious *muḥaddith*, mufti, and *wā’iz* from whom Yazīd ibn Samura heard the statement: “The gatherings of *dhikr* are the gatherings of [teaching] the *halāl* and the *harām*.”⁵⁸ His trustworthiness and/or memory were contested by al-Bukhārī, Abū Zur’a, Ibn Ḥibbān, Shu’ba, al-Bayhaqī, al-‘Uqaylī, and Ibn Ḥajar, but he was nevertheless declared *thiqa* by Ibn Ma’in, Abū Ḥātim, al-Dāraquṭnī, al-Thawrī, Mālik, al-Awzā’ī, Aḥmad, Ibn al-Madīnī, Ya’qūb ibn Shayba, Ibn Sa’d, al-‘Ijlī, al-Ṭabarānī, and al-Tirmidhī, while Ibn Rajab concludes he is “*thiqa thiqa*.”⁵⁹

Recently, a Deobandi writer forwarded the odd claim that al-Qārī’s text in *Sharḥ al-Shifā* actually stated, “NOT THAT his soul ﷺ is present in the houses of the Muslims” (*lā anna rūḥahu ḥāḍiratun fī buyūti al-muslimīn*) that is, the diametrical opposite of what al-Qārī actually said!

⁵⁵Al-Qāḍī ‘Iyād, *al-Shifā* (p. 555-556=*Ithāf Ahl al-Wafā* p. 369).

⁵⁶Al-Qārī, *Sharḥ al-Shifā* (2:117).

⁵⁷Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr* (18:173 #19894).

⁵⁸Narrated by al-Dhahabī in the *Siyar* (6:360).

⁵⁹Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ ‘Ilal al-Tirmidhī* (2:780-781). Cf. al-Dhahabī’s *Mīzān* (3:73) and *al-Mughnī* (1:614-615 #4122) with the notes of Dr. Nūr al-Dīn ‘Itr, and al-‘Arna’ūt and Ma’rūf’s *Tahrīr Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb* (3:16-17 #4600) although the latter misattribute *tawthīq* to al-Bukhārī while ‘Itr misattributes *tad’īf* to Aḥmad!

He [al-Qārī] discussed the issue in the *Sharḥ* of *Shifā*, that *lā anna rūḥahu ḥāḍiratun fī buyūti al-muslimīn* i.e. this notion is incorrect that the soul of our Master Hazrat Mohammed ﷺ is present in the homes of the Muslims. In some copies the word *lā* has been dropped and has without any reason created confusion for some individuals, including Mufti Ahmed Yar Khān sahib (see *Jaa al-Haqq* p. 142). ... In all his explicit quotes Hazrat Mullā Alī al-Qārī himself negates the belief of *ḥāḍir wa nāẓir*. Those who have relied on his brief, indistinct quotes (out of context) are absolutely and definitely wrong.⁶⁰

That one can actually dare to make the above claim is only because of ignorance of the Arabic language since al-Qārī prefaces the statement with the word “meaning (*ay*),” which would be grammatically incorrect if it were followed by a disclaimer such as “not that his soul is present in the houses of the Muslims.” The truth is that no such word as *lā* has been dropped because there was no such word there in the first place, and the claim that there was is nothing short of tampering (*tahrīf*). Furthermore, the word al-Qārī used for “present” is *ḥāḍir* in the masculine, not *ḥāḍiratun* in the feminine, as *rūḥ* can have either gender but the masculine is more appropriate here to refer to the Prophet ﷺ.

Another one of those of the same School considered by some to be knowledgeable objected to attributing the characteristics of *ḥāḍir nāẓir* to the Prophet ﷺ because, he claimed, these attributes belong to Allāh ﷻ. Even if the latter premise were true, the reasoning is spurious and is like saying that because *al-Ra’ūf* and *al-Raḥīm* are Divine Attributes, they cannot be also Prophetic Attributes. This sophistry was refuted by al-Qāḍī ‘Iyād in *al-Shifā* where he said:

Know that Allāh ﷻ has bestowed a mark of honor on many of the Prophets by investing them with some of His names: for example He calls Ishāq and Ismā’īl “knowing” (*‘alīm*) and “forbearing” (*ḥalīm*), Ibrāhīm “forbearing” (*ḥalīm*), Nūḥ “thankful” (*shakūr*), Mūsā “noble” (*karīm*) and “strong” (*qawī*), Yūsuf “a knowing guardian” (*ḥafīẓ*, *‘alīm*), Ayyūb “patient” (*ṣabūr*), ‘Īsā and Yaḥyā “devoted” (*barr*), and Ismā’īl “truthful to the promise” (*ṣādiq al-wa’d*)... Yet He has preferred our Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ since He has adorned him with a wealth of His names in His Mighty Book and on the tongue of His Prophets.⁶¹

⁶⁰Sarfraz Safdar, *Aakho(n) Ki T(d)andak* (p. 167-168).

⁶¹Al-Qāḍī ‘Iyād, *al-Shifā* as translated by ‘Ā’isha A. Bewley, *Muhammad Messenger of Allāh: al-Shifā of Qāḍī ‘Iyād* (Granada: Madinah Press, 1992) p. 126.

The above evidence establishes beyond doubt that there is no impediment to the possibility of *ḥāḍir nāzīr* to be Attributes shared by Allāh Most High with some of His servants if such two Names should be established to be His. In fact, it is known that the two angel-scribes, the *qarīn*, the angel of death, and Shaytan, are also present, seeing, hearing, and fully witnessing the deeds of human beings at any given time.

But are *Hāḍir* and *Nāzīr* among the Divine Names and Attributes? Imām Aḥmad al-Sirhindī reportedly said: “Allāh ﷻ is aware of each and every minor and major condition and is *Hāḍir* and *Nāzīr*. One should feel shame before Him.”⁶²

However, the Divine Attributes are *tawqīfīyya* – ordained and non-inferable. Logic, reasoning, analogy, and other forms of interpretation are not used to infer an attribute but only literal Divine disclosure through the primary two sources of the *Sharī‘a* i.e. Qur’ān and Sunna. This is a point of doctrine that is present in most if not all books of *‘aqīda* including the Mātūrīdī classics. So we cannot speak of *al-Hāḍir*, while *al-Nāzīr* is the same as *al-Shahīd* where the Divine Sight means His Knowledge. Imām al-Bayhaqī said:

The meaning of “The Witness” (*al-Shahīd*) is He Who is well aware of all that creatures can know only by way of witnessing while being present. . . because a human being who is far away is subject to the limitation and shortcomings of his sensory organs, while Allāh ﷻ is not endowed with sensory organs nor subject to the limitations of those who possess them.⁶³ (*Shāhid* is also a Prophetic Name in the Qur’ān.)

As for *al-Hāḍir* it is precluded, because *Hāḍir* in Arabic has the sense of a being physically present at a location, i.e. attributes of the created that are absolutely precluded from the Creator. Therefore *Hāḍir* in relation to Allāh ﷻ, like the attribute of omnipresence, may only be applied figuratively to mean that He is All-Knowledgeable, but neither “Omnipresent” nor *Hāḍir* have actually been reported or mentioned among the Divine Attributes in the Qur’ān, the Sunna, and the texts of the early Imāms. Allāh knows best.

When some of these rebuttals were presented to the above-mentioned objector, he replied verbatim, that “By *Haazir* and *Naazir*, we mean Allāh’s knowledge is complete and comprehensive. Nothing is hidden from the absolute knowledge of Allāh. In other words, he is Aleem and this quality of

Allāh is repeatedly mentioned in the Qur’aan.” By thus replying he has acknowledged that:

1. He used the Attributes *Hāḍir* and *Nāzīr* figuratively, to mean ‘*Alīm*’.
2. He has done so on the basis of his own interpretation of the former two terms as meaning the latter term, neither (a) on linguistic bases nor (b) according to a Law-based stipulation (*naṣṣ shar‘ī*).

To return to the statement of Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī – Allāh sanctify his soul – that “[He] is *Hāḍir* and *Nāzīr*,” there are also caveats:

1. Isolated statements cannot be used to invalidate a basic rule of *Ahl al-Sunna* in the Divine Names and Attributes, namely that spelled above as found in the doctrine of the *Salaf* and *Khalaf* on *al-Asmā’ wa al-Sifāt*.
2. In practical terms, Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī was careful to frame his statement within an affirmation of the sincere *murīd*’s consciousness of the all-encompassing nature of Divine Knowledge within the ladder of spiritual process in the Naqshbandī *Tarīqa*, just as the *Shuyūkh* of the Shādhilī *Tarīqa* teach their *murīds* to say, “*Allāhu ḥāḍirī, Allāhu nāzīrī, Allāhu ma‘ī*.” These expressions are meant to induce scrupulous Godwariness and in fact all refer to the attributes of Divine Knowledge without any resemblance whatsoever to the *ḥudūr* or *nazar* of created beings other than in name.
3. In doctrinal terms, Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī means something other than what those who use *ḥāḍir* in the Arabic language and in relation to the Prophet ﷺ mean. Namely, he means *ḥāḍir* not in the normal creatural sense of “present” but in the non-creatural sense of “Divine Knowledge of Things in their Essence” (*al-‘ilm al-ḥudūrī*). This is explained by him at length in his epistle 48 of Volume Three to the Prince, Zādah Khwāja Muḥammad Sa‘īd, titled “The Secret of His Nearness and the Self-Disclosure of His Essence.” This is a highly peculiar, specialized sense that should be treated thus lest one makes Shaykh Sirhindī say other than what he means.
4. Some innovatively use the same phrase in terms of a stipulation of *‘Aqīda*, giving rise to legitimate doubt as to what they mean by their use of the phrase, a doubt fortified by their adding made-up provisions or conditions such as “*Hāḍir* and *Nāzīr* cannot be applied to anyone besides Allāh.” By saying this they have invalidated the *sine qua non* pre-requisites of the judge for receiving witnesses to any and all cases that require witnesses. Rather, they mean to say, “cannot be applied to anyone besides Allāh ﷻ in the sense they are applied to Allāh” while they can be applied to others besides Allāh in the sense that applies to creatures.

⁶²Maktubat-e-Imām Rabbani, Volume 1, Letter 78 addressed to Jabbari Khān.

⁶³Al-Bayhaqī, *al-Asmā’ wa al-Sifāt* (Kawtharī ed. p. 46-47; Hāshidī ed. 1:126-127).

5. Those who use *Hādīr* and *Nāzīr* in relation to the Best of Creatures, our Master Muḥammad ﷺ, mean it in the creatural sense of his noble soul or noble essence being physically and spiritually present wherever Allāh Most High wishes. One who denies that the Prophet ﷺ can be present in that sense, has left Islām.

6. None of what the opponents bring up as supposed proofs actually invalidates the use of *Hādīr* and *Nāzīr* for the Prophet ﷺ among other shared Names as we have already demonstrated. For example, Allāh Most High is *Ra'ūf* and *Rahīm*, and He is *Nūr*, and He is al-Shāhid – the Witness – and al-Shahīd – the Giver of testimony – all five attributes being also given by Him in His Own Pre-Eternal Speech – the Qur'ān – to the Prophet himself ﷺ.

7. If it comes to scholarly quotations, they should accept that the attributes of *Hādīr* and *Nāzīr* are applied to the Prophet ﷺ by the Ulema of *Ahl al-Sunna* such as the ḥadīth Masters Ibn 'Allān al-Bakrī al-Ṣiddīqī and Mullā Alī al-Qārī as cited above, and countless others such as the Friends of Allāh known to keep company with the Prophet ﷺ day and night, among them Shaykh Abū al-'Abbās al-Mursī, Shaykh Abū al-Hasan al-Shādhilī, and Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Dabbāgh, probably also Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī himself – may Allāh sanctify their secrets.

Another objection was published on a website titled, “The Belief that the Prophet Comes to the Milad Meeting” – originally part of Ibn Bāz's misguided fatwa against the celebration of the *Mawlid* – and reads as follows:

Some people also believe that *Rasūlullāh* ﷺ comes to this function and due to this belief, they stand up in respect and veneration. This is absolutely untrue. *Rasūlullāh* ﷺ does not arrive at any “*Eid-e-Milad-un-Nabee, Sall-Allāhu alayhi wa sallam*” function. He is in his *Rawḍa-e-Mubārak* (grave) at Madīnah Munawwarah and will emerge from it at the onset of *Yawmul-Qiyāmah*, or the Day of Judgement. ... The following *Āyāt* and Ḥadīths testify to this fact: The Qur'ān, addressing *Rasūlullāh* ﷺ announces explicitly: **﴿Lo! You will die, and Lo! They will die. Then Lo! On the day of resurrection, before your sustainer, you will dispute﴾**. [Az-Zumar 39:30-31] At another place, *Rasūlullāh* ﷺ is addressed together with the rest of mankind: - **﴿Then Lo! After that you surely die, then Lo! On the day of resurrection you are raised (again)﴾** [Al-Muminun 23:16] *Rasūlullāh* ﷺ himself has said in a Ḥadīth: “My grave will be the first to be opened on the day of *Qiyāmah* and I shall be the first person to intercede and the first person whose intercession shall be accepted.” These *Āyāt* and Ḥadīths as well (and

there are others) prove that all of mankind will be raised from their graves on the day of *Qiyāmah*, with *Rasūlullāh* ﷺ being no exception. On this, there is consensus of the entire Ummah.⁶⁴

The reply is: Does this Mufti those that imitate him have knowledge of the unseen and the gift of ubiquity? For he positively affirms that the Prophet ﷺ (1) is not present at a given Mawlid function and (2) is not possibly present at any place other than in Madīnah, in his grave! So then, he allows – as shown by several authentic ḥadīths – that the other Prophets can be in Bayt al-Maqdis praying, and in Makka making *tawāf*, and in the Seven Heavens, but he insists that our Prophet ﷺ is confined to his Noble Grave?

Yet, testimonies from the great *Awliyā'* and *Ṣāliḥīn* of this Umma have flown uninterruptedly for a thousand years to the effect that the Prophet ﷺ was and continues to be seen by countless pure eyes in countless different locations. Read the fatwā to that effect in Shaykh al-Islām al-Haytamī's *Fatāwā Ḥadīthiyya* (p. 297), entitled: “Question: Can the Prophet ﷺ be seen in a wakeful state?” The answer is yes, and if he is seen, then he is present and we believe this without asking how.

Sayyid Aḥmad Zaynī Dahlān said in his book *al-Uṣūl li al-Wuṣūl ilā Ma'rifat Allāh wa al-Rasūl*, that when the *walī* is said to see the Prophet ﷺ “in a waking state” (*yaqazatan*), “it means that he sees only the spiritual form (*rūhaniyya*) of the Prophet ﷺ, not his physical form.” But, as the Moroccan Shaykh Sīdī Muṣṭafā al-Baṣīr commented, there is no impediment to seeing him in his physical form, or to his coming to a place in his physical form, while Shāh Waliyyullāh al-Dihlawī said in his book *Fuyūḍ al-Raḥmān* (p. 116-118) that the presence of the Prophet ﷺ in the office of imām at every prayer “is a fact” and that “the noble *Rūh* of the Prophet ﷺ is similar to a physical body.” Many valuable pages were recorded from the disclosures of Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Dabbāgh on this issue by his student 'Alī ibn al-Mubārak in *al-Ibrīz*.

Yes, we do know with positive knowledge that he is in al-Madīnah al-Munawwara – but in the state of *Barzakh*. That state, by the decree of Allāh ﷻ, is governed by laws other than phenomenal laws of time and place. Imām Mālik said in the *Muwatta'*: “It has reached me [*i.e.* from the Prophet ﷺ with an authentic chain as is well-known concerning Mālik's *balāghāt*] that the souls [of the dead] are free to come and go as they please.” Further

⁶⁴See http://www.albalagh.net/qa/milad_qa2.shtml.

readings about this can be found in Sayyid Muḥammad ‘Alawī al-Mālikī’s *Manhaj al-Salaf*,⁶⁵ Ibn al-Qayyim’s *Kitāb al-Rūḥ*, or *al-Tadhkira* by Qurtubī.

Furthermore, there is an Islamic rule of law (*qā’ida*) that says, *al-ithbātu muqaddamun ‘alā al-naḥī* meaning: “Affirmation takes precedence over denial”; and another one stating, *man ‘alima hujjatun ‘alā man lam ya‘lam*: “The one who knows is a conclusive proof against the one who does not know.” Even in the matter of a simple ḥadīth narration there are things we know and things we do not know, as that Mufti is eminently aware.

As for the verses and ḥadīth quoted by the objector to the effect that the Prophet ﷺ will die and be raised, the quoter himself concludes, “These *Āyāt* and Ḥadīths as well (and there are others) prove that all of mankind will be raised from their graves on the day of Qiyāmah, with *Rasūlullāh* ﷺ being no exception. On this, there is consensus of the entire Ummah.” This is like the Arabic saying, “I spoke to him in the East and he answered me in the West.” There is no question about the fundamental tenet of Resurrection in Islām, and such evidence is irrelevant to the specific matters of (1) seeing the Prophet ﷺ present in a wakeful state or (2) his presence in the gatherings of the *Sālihīn* in *Dunyā* and *Ākhira* nor should it have been brought up in this fatwā. So this purported evidence is true, and so is the rest of the evidence that we have adduced in affirmation of the Prophet’s ﷺ presence with the Umma and full awareness of their states, including the saying of Allāh Most High: **﴿And know that the Messenger of Allāh is among you﴾** (49:7). Meaning, according to the majority of the commentaries: Do not lie.

The following are quoted from Sayyid Muḥammad ibn ‘Alawī al-Mālikī’s commentary on this issue from his book on Mawlid titled *Hawl al-Iḥtīfāl bi Dhikrā al-Mawlid al-Nabawī al-Sharīf* (“Regarding the Celebration of the Prophet’s Birthday”) translated and cited in the *Encyclopedia of Islamic Doctrine* (3:45-48):

Some of those who forbid standing for the Prophet ﷺ do so because of what they imagine people to believe when standing and invoking blessings on him: namely, that the Prophet ﷺ is actually present in person at that time. However, this is not the reason why the people stand and no one claims this except those who actually object to standing. Rather, those who stand are only expressing happiness and love, and they are overflowing with respect and dedication at the mention of the Prophet ﷺ in the august assembly of those who remember him. They

⁶⁵See our translated volume titled *The Prophets in Barzakh* available at As-Sunna Foundation of America Publications.

stand to attention because of their awe before the light that dawns upon creation for the one whose fame Allāh ﷻ has exalted high. They stand as a sign of thankfulness for the immense mercy bestowed on creation in the person of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.

At the same time it is impermissible to object to the freedom of the soul in *Barzakh* to travel wherever it pleases by Divine permission, according to the sayings reported by Ibn al-Qayyim in his book *Kitāb al-Rūḥ* (p. 144) whereby Salmān al-Fārisī said: “The souls of the believers are in an isthmus of land from where they go wherever they wish,” and Imām Mālik said: “I have heard (*balaghani*) that the soul is set free and goes wherever it wishes.”⁶⁶

Standing or dancing out of joy for the Prophet ﷺ, or for what is connected to him or proceeds from him, has clear proofs in the Sunna....

Sayyid al-Mālikī lists a long list of the well-known authentic proof-texts to that effect. Then he concludes:

There is no doubt that such singing, dancing, reciting of poetry, and banging the drum was for joy at being with the Prophet ﷺ, nor did he condemn or frown upon such displays in any way whatsoever. These are common displays of happiness and lawful merriment, and similarly to stand up at the mention of the birth of the Prophet ﷺ is an ordinary act that shows love and gladness symbolizing the joy of creation: it does not constitute worship, nor law, nor Sunna! That is why the savant al-Barzanjī (d.1103) said in his famous poem of Mawlid:

*wa qad sanna ahlu al-‘ilmi wa al-faḍli wa al-tuqā
qiyāman ‘alā al-aqdāmi ma‘a ḥusni im‘āni
bi tashkhīṣi dhāti al-muṣṭafā wa huwa ḥāḍirun
bi ay maqāmīn fīhi yudhkaru bal dānī*

Meaning: “It is the usage of the excellent people of knowledge and piety to stand on their feet in the best demeanor // acting as if the Prophet ﷺ were actually present every time they mention him and even visualizing him coming near them.”

⁶⁶Here the Shaykh acknowledges that although the Noble Presence is not the reason why people stand up, yet there is no impediment to its possibility anyway.

Observe that he spoke well when he said, “acting as if he were present and visualizing him,” that is, strongly calling to mind his gracious form and qualities so as to increase and perfect the motions of their hearts and bodies towards respecting and loving him, as the narrations show. This is a delicate matter from which are shut out those in whose hearts Allāh did not place mercy. And Allāh knows best.”⁶⁷

Among those who wrote poetry mentioning standing at the mention of the Prophet ﷺ are the ḥadīth Master Abū Mūsā al-Aṣḥabānī (d. 581) saying:

*qiyāmī wa al-‘azīzi ilayka ḥaqqun
wa tarku al-ḥaqqi mā lā yastaqīmu*

*fa hal aḥadun lahu ‘aqlun wa lubbun wa ma ‘rifa
yarāka fa lā yaqūmu?*

Meaning: “I swear by the All-Powerful that my standing for you [O Prophet] is right and true and to leave truth and right is to embrace error. // I ask: can anyone possessed of a mind and a heart and knowledge, upon seeing you, not stand up?”

Imām al-Nawawī mentioned it in his famous fatwā titled *al-Tarkhīṣ fīl-Ikrām bil-Qiyām li- Dhawī al-Faḍli wa al-Maẓiyyati min Ahl al-Islām ‘alā Jihat al-Birr wal-Tawqīr wal-Iḥtirām la ‘alā Jihat al-Riyā’ wal-I-‘zām* (“The Permissibility of Honoring, by Standing up, Those Who Possess Excellence and Distinction among the People of Islām: in the Spirit of Piety, Reverence, and Respect, not in the Spirit of Display and Aggrandizement”).⁶⁸

Another poet to recommend standing for the Prophet ﷺ was Yaḥyā ibn Yūsuf ibn Yaḥyā al-Ṣarṣarī (588-656). Al-Dhahabī described him in glowing terms in *Tārīkh al-Islām*:

The erudite Shaykh, the ascetic, Jamal al-Dīn Abū Zakariyyā al-Ṣarṣarī al-Baghdādī al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḍarīr, the philologist, man of letters, poet, and author of the Prophetic panegyrics that are known East and West.... He kept company with Shaykh ‘Alī ibn Idrīs, the companion of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir [al-Gīlānī]. He heard from a number of narrators and narrated ḥadīth.... We heard that when the Tatars came to him – and he was blind – he stabbed one of them with his walking-stick and killed him then was killed as a *shahīd*.

⁶⁷Al-Mālikī, *Manhaj al-Salaf*, as translated in the *Encyclopedia of Islamic Doctrine* (3:45-48) with slight changes.

⁶⁸Al-Nawawī, *al-Tarkhīṣ* (p. 94).

Al-Dhahabī goes on to quote a panegyric of thirty-five verses in each of which al-Ṣarṣarī used all of the Arabic alphabet.⁶⁹ Al-Dhahabī’s student, Ibn al-Subkī, narrated in his *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyya al-Kubrā* about his father, Shaykh al-Islām al-Taḳī al-Subkī:

One time he attended a *khatma* in the Umawī Mosque, the judges and eminent people of the region before him as he sat in the *mihrāb* of the *Ṣahāba*. The reciter declaimed al-Ṣarṣarī’s Prophetic panegyric beginning, *qalīlun li-madḥil-Muṣṭafā-l-khaṭṭu bidh-dhahabī* (“Too slight for the praise of the Elect One is gold calligraphy”). When he reached the line *wa ‘an yanḥada-l-ashrafu ‘inda samā’ihi* (“And that the nobility stand when they hear him mentioned”), emotion overcame the Shaykh and Imām [my father] so that he sprang to his feet and stood due to that state. The people considered they all had to stand also, which they did, and an excellent moment ensued.⁷⁰

It is established that “Whenever the Lady Fāṭima entered a room where the Prophet ﷺ was sitting he would get up and greet her, take her hand, kiss her, and make her sit in his place; and whenever he entered a room where she was sitting she would get up and greet him, take his hand, kiss him, and make him sit in her place.”⁷¹

The conclusion of those endowed with sense is that the presence of the Noble *Rūḥāniyya* of the Prophet ﷺ at pious gatherings and with whatever select individuals of the Umma Allāh Most High wishes, is a *ghaybī* matter which is outside the province of anyone other than the Lawgiver to declare positively impossible. **«They encompass nothing of His knowledge save what He will»** (2:255). **«(He is) the Knower of the Unseen and He reveals unto none His secret, save unto every Messenger whom He has chosen»** (72:26-27); **«Nor does he withhold grudgingly a knowledge of the Unseen»** (81:24). In fact, mass-transmitted (*mutawātir*) testimony proves beyond doubt that such presence is a reality. **«Nay, but those who disbelieve live in denial and Allāh, all unseen, surrounds them»** (85:19-20). Its modality is unknown while its description is a matter of spiritual experience (*dhawq*) and good manners we pray to be granted. *Wal-Ḥamdu lillāhi Rabb al-‘Ālamīn*.

⁶⁹Al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām* (Yrs 651-660:303-306 #339).

⁷⁰Ibn al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyya al-Kubrā* (10:208).

⁷¹Narrated from ‘Ā’isha by al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasā’ī, al-Hākim (“*sahīh* narration per the criteria of al-Bukhārī and Muslim”) while al-Zayla‘ī in *Nasb al-Rāya* (4:258) said: “Al-Tirmidhī said: *ḥadīth ḥasan* and in some of the manuscripts: *ḥasan saḥīh*.” Ibn al-Muqri’ narrates it in *al-Rukhsa bil-Qiyām* (p. 91 #26).